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Mexico's Monthly Review

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HOWARD S. PHILLIPS
EDITOR

The Aftermath of Devaluation

THE devaluation of the Mexican peso from 8.65 to 12.50 to the dollar, decreed by the government on the 19th. of April as an expediency to safeguard and enlarge the country's, diminishing dollar reserve, in its essence defines a crucial point in a process of actual material decline that has affected the nation's economy throughout the past ten years.

During these past ten years Mexico's population has increased by 30%, while its national income in terms of pesos has multiplied about five times. However, the degree of price inflation during the corresponding period, exceeding the increase in peso income, has actually diminished the real per-capita income by some 7%. These figures clearly disclose the fact that the volume of national production has not sufficed for national needs. The devaluation of Mexico's currency indicates, in other words, a material depreciation, a decline in the scope of its national wealth.

On the other hand, in resorting to the drastic step of devaluation, the Mexican government, beyond the immediate aim to safeguard its dollar reserve, is pursuing a long-range aim to stabilize and increase the country's economy. As a short-range goal, it anticipates that this drastic measure will increase the volume of exports and at the same time reduce the imports of non-essential goods, thereby creating an even or a favorable balance in international trade.

Considering the fact that Mexico's international trade, representing since 1950 an annual deficit of well over a billion pesos, and climbing to almost two billion in 1953, has signified a very serious drain in the nation's economy, we may see that this short-range aim in itself almost justifies the devaluation decree. To be sure, while the depletion of its dollar reserve ensuing from an unfavorable trade balance has been offset during these years by the important dollar income from tourist traffic, this income, being subject to fluctuations and dependent on external conditions, cannot be regarded as certain. Mexico must, therefore, strive to eliminate its foreign trade deficit and thus stabilize and secure its dollar reserve.

In devaluating its currency Mexico hopes to increase the volume of its exports, especially of its mineral products, and thus relieve the mining industry from the difficult situation it has lately confronted as result of curtailed demand and declining dollar prices. With a wage-scale slightly above the pre-devaluation level, Mexico will be able to compete advantageously in the foreign market not only in the sale of minerals but of textiles and other industrial products of which it has an exportable surplus. In order to further stimulate exports, the government has lifted completely the taxes hitherto levied on sales abroad, permitting the exporter to retain a proportion equivalent to 9.37 pesos per dollar of the benefits received under the new exchange ratio.

It is, moreover, expected that the new rate of exchange will effectively curb the flight of Mexican capital, which during the first four months of this year has reduced the dollar reserve held by the Bank of Mexico by 40 million dollars, or from 241 to 201 million. This flight, largely stimulated by speculators, rose to alarming proportions during the first two weeks of April, when it reached the amount of 21 million dollars. It is reasonable to assume that a considerable portion of the money that was taken out from Mexico during recent months will be brought back through the inducement of a more than 30% gain vouchsafed by the new rate of exchange, and that ultimately it might be invested in productive enterprise.

It is also anticipated that devaluation will greatly stimulate the volume of tourist traffic from the United States and thus augment Mexico's dollar income from this source. The government has taken steps to maintain, as far as it is possible, the former schedule of transport, hotel and restaurant rates, which should make travel in Mexico for the dollar-spending visitor extremely inexpensive.

On the other hand, devaluation should induce new investment of foreign capital, for it might compel some industrial enterprises abroad to establish local plants so as to retain their established markets. In order to stimulate such investment, the government has removed the 25% import tax formerly levied on machinery, prime materials and essential food items.

These are the salient benefits Mexico expects to reap from the new monetary situation. The ultimate extent of these benefits, however, will be determined by the government's ability to curb price inflation, or at least to minimize such inflation to a nominal unavoidable degree. The government is determined to maintain the former price ceiling on corn, wheat, rice, beans and sugar, calculating that the reserve of such basic food items it has on hand is sufficiently ample to meet the demand during the forthcoming months, or before it is replenished by new crops. Granting, however, that the price-level of such items which cannot be subjected to official control must go up, the government has announced a 10% increase in the salaries of all federal employees, effective on the first of this month. This increase might set a norm for a similar wage increase in private enterprise.

It is obvious that price inflation must follow currency devaluation, that for the time being this drastic measure has decreased rather than increased the nation's economy. Viewed, however, not as an emergency measure which has inevitably produced a hazardous period of readjustment, but as a new, decisive and clear-cut policy that fixes the course of national finances for years to come, this measure bears a definite promise of accelerating the country's economic expansion and progress.

A Gentleman

By Kim Schee

ANTONIO always struck me as a man possessing a grand assortment of human qualities. He was a man in his early thirties, scrupulously honest, unostentatiously generous. He accepted with good grace the inequalities of his birth and education, and he was an unusually talented jack-of-all-trades, who worked hard and conscientiously at whatever task was set before him. He was the one peon in Mexico, at least the one I observed, who was dignified and noble without being too servile. Yet, Antonio, like all men, had his foibles. He was as superstitious as a gypsy and displayed no fortitude whatsoever against the onslaughts of the opposite sex. Women dazzled him and could reduce him to a third-rate moron.

When I knew Antonio he was employed as a gardener by a Mexican painter whose property adjoined mine. I slowly got acquainted with him, for I occasionally spent a few hours puttering about rather futilely in my own garden. At first he was merely courteous, but when he learned that I was genuinely interested in gardening he became friendly. My red Bougainvillea, I learned, was a periodical victim of ants, and this could be remedied by putting a circular trough containing water at the base of the plant; my roses were "sick" because the earth needed a certain carbon deposit; my jasmine plants, which I had tended so painstakingly, would thrive better without so much sun. These, of course, were very simple and practical suggestions. Antonio, however, abounded in what might be labeled esoteric suggestions. For instance, he tried to convince me of the evil-eye theory which held that any person with a sinister gleam in his eye could kill the healthiest plant or tree by merely glancing at it. This was especially true of all

pregnant women, as the gleam in their eyes had a singularly withering effect on all plants. Another pet theory of his concerned evil spirits that visited plants as well as human beings, and the most successful way of exorcising them was to hang a green chile leaf on the plants and trees.

Occasionally Antonio would drop the subject of flowers for women, and on this subject he was less sure of himself, less didactic. The few women he had known intimately were an enigma as far as he was concerned.

"Señor," he would say, "I have tried being kind to women, I have tried beating them, and I have tried indifference. Nothing, however, seems to work, and still I continue to adore women. Why is this, Señor?"

I admitted that I knew absolutely nothing about such things but added that perhaps his experience with women had been very unlucky.

"Yes," he replied seriously, "women have always brought me bad luck, always."

"You've never been married?" I asked.

"Married?" he replied gravely. "Oh, no, Señor, never. Matrimonio—Muerte—M—is absolutely my unlucky letter. If I should marry, I should die. Of that I am certain, Señor."

This daily communication with Antonio, which I grew to anticipate with pleasure, lasted only for a period of several months. Unfortunately, his employer left the village to live in Mexico City, and Antonio was forced to seek employment elsewhere.

A whole year passed before I heard from Antonio again. Then I received a message scribbled on a small piece of notepaper asking me if I would kindly give fifteen pesos to the bearer of the message. I gave the bearer fifteen pesos without asking any questions. It never occurred to me not to trust a person I admired as much as Antonio.

The next morning Antonio came to my house while I was breakfasting in the patio. He gave no indication that anything unusual had happened. I had the feeling that I had seen him only yesterday. He was one of those rare individuals who could efface time. He stood near to where I was sitting with his big sombrero in his hand, I offered him a chair, but he remained standing.

"Señor," he said, taking some bills from his pocket, "I have come to pay you a debt of honor and to apologize."

I felt self-conscious, a trifle hurt. "But you are a friend of mine, Antonio. I felt honored that you asked me to help you. You needn't apologize. As for the money, there is no hurry..."

He put the money on the breakfast table and smiled. "Señor, friendship and money do not mix well. You must always sacrifice one for the other. I prefer friendship."

I pocketed the money and thanked him, both for the sentiment and the money. He started to go but stopped and confronted me again.

"As a friend, Señor, I want to tell you why I had to borrow that fifteen pesos from you."

"You do as you like, Antonio," I said. "That wasn't part of the agreement, however."

"I understand, Señor, but sooner or later you will hear about it, and it is better that you know the truth. I needed the fifteen pesos to pay a fine."

"A fine...?"



Water Color.

By René D'Harnancourt.

Continued on page 56



Oil.

By Carlos Sanchez M.

The Impact of Mexico City

By Sybille Bedford

THE first impact of Mexico City is physical, immensely physical. Sun, Altitude, Movement, Smells, Noise. And it is inescapable. There is no taking refuge in one more insulating shell, no use sitting in the hotel bedroom fumbling with guide books: it is here, one is in it. A dazzling live sun beats in through a window; geranium scented white-washed cool air comes from the patio; ear-drums are fluttering, dizziness fills the head as one is bending over a suitcase, one is eight thousand feet above the sea and the air one breathes is charged with lightness. So dazed, tempted, buoyed, one wanders out and like the stranger at the party who was handed a very large glass of champagne at the door, one floats along the streets in uncertain bliss, swept into rapids of doing, hooting, selling. Everything is agitated, crowded, spilling over; the pavements are narrow and covered with fruit. As one picks one's way over mangoes and avocado pears, one is tumbled into the gutter by a water-carrier, avoids a Buick Saloon and a basin of live charcoal, skips up again searing a tethered chicken, shies from an exposed deformity and bumps into a Red Indian gentleman in a tight black suit. Now a parrot shrieks at one from an upper window, lottery tickets flutter in one's face, one's foot is trodden on by a goat and one's skirt clutched at by a baby with the face of an idol. A person long confined to the consistent North may well imagine himself returned to one of the larger Mediterranean Ports, Naples perhaps: there are the people at once lounging and pressing, there is that oozing into the streets of business and domesticity; the show of motor traffic zigzagged by walking beasts; the lumps of coun-

try life, peasants and donkey-carts, jars and straw, pushing their way along the pavements; there are the overflowing trams, the size and blaze of the Vermont advertisements, the inky office clothes, the rich open food shops strung with great hams and cheeses, and the shoddy store with the mean bedroom suite; the ragged children, the carved fronts of palaces and the seven ginnerack skyscrapers. Nothing is lacking: monster Cafés, Carpet Turks, the plate-glass window of the Aeroplane Agency, funeral wreaths for sale at every corner and that unconvincing air of urban modernity. One looks, one snuffs, one breathes—familiar, haunting, long-missed, memories and the present merge, and for a happy quarter of an hour one is plunged into the loved element of lost travels. Then Something Else creeps in. Something Else was always here. There were not the looks, not the gestures. Where is the openness of Italy, that ready boom? This summer does not have the Southern warmth, that round hug as from a fellow creature. Here, a vertical sun aims at one's head like a dagger—how well the Aztecs read its nature—while the layers of the air remain inviolate like mountain streams, cool, fine, flowing, as though refreshed by some bubbling spring. Europe is six thousand miles across the Seas and this Glacier City a tropical latitude has never, been touched by the Mediterranean. In a minor, a comfortable, loop-holed, mitigated way, one faces what Cortez faced in the absolute five hundred years ago: the unknown.

Well what does one do? Where does one turn to first? Here we are in the capital of this immense country and we know nothing of either. We don't

know anybody. We hardly know the language. We have an idea of what there is to see, but we do not know where anything is from where, nor how to get there. We do not have much money to spend, and we have much too much luggage. Winter clothes and clothes for the tropics, town clothes and country clothes and the bottoms of our bags are falling out with books. We have a few letters of introduction. They are not promising. From vague friends to their vague friends, Europeans with uncertain addresses who are supposed to have gone to Mexico before the war. Guillermo had pressed a letter into my hand at the station; some German names covered most of the envelope. "G.eat friends," he had said, "they have had such trouble, with their papers." E. had been told to put her name down at the American Embassy. Nobody seemed to know any Mexicans. No one had written to people running a mine or a sugar place; or heard of some local sage, a Norman Douglas of the Latin Americas, who knew everything, the people and the stories, plants and old brawls, how to keep the bores at bay and where to get good wine.

God be praised we have a roof over our heads and it is not the roof of the *Pensión Hernández*. The spirit that made us fall in with Guillermo's suggestion has waned, already there is a Southwind change. A man on the train told us about a small hotel, Mexican run, in front of a park. To this we drove from the station, and found a Colonial palace with a weatherbeaten pink facade. Of course there were rooms. We have a whole suiteful of them. Bedrooms and sitting-room, dressing-room, and a kind of pantry with a sink, a bathroom and a trunk closet and a cupboard with a sky-light. Everything clean as clean can be and chockfull of imitation Spanish furniture, straight-backed tapestry chairs, twisty iron lamps with weak bulbs. There is a balcony on to the square and a terrace on to the patio. The patio has a pleasant Moorish shape; it is whitewashed, full of flowers, with a fountain in the middle and goldfish in the fountain, and all of it for thirty shillings a day.

The first step obviously is luncheon. Time, too, we were off the streets. That sun! E.'s face is a most peculiar colour. One had been warned to take it easy. One had been warned not to drink the water, to keep one's head covered, to have typhoid injections, beware of chilli, stay in after dark, never to touch ice, eat lettuce, butter, shell-fish, goat cheese, cream, uncooked fruit. We turned into a restaurant. I had a small deposit of past tourist Spanish to draw on; it did not flow, but it was equal to ordering the "comida corrida," the table d'hôte luncheon. Every table is occupied with what in an Anglo-Saxon country would be a party here seems just the family. Complexions are either café-au-lait, nourished chestnut, glowing copper, or milky mauve and dirty yellow. Everybody looks either quite exquisite or too monstrous to be true, without any transitional age between flowering ephebe and oozing hipopotamus. The male ephebes are dressed in extreme, skin-tight versions of California sports clothes, shiny, gabardine, belted slacksuits in ice-cream colours, pistachio and rich chocolate; their elders are compressed in the darkest, dingiest kind of readymade business outfits, and ladies of all proportions draped in lengths of sleazy material in the more decorative solid colours, blood orange, emerald, chrome yellow, azure. There is a wait of twenty-five minutes, then a succession of courses is deposited before us in a breathless rush. We dip our spoons into the soup, a delicious cream of vegetable that would have done honour to a private house in the French Provinces before the war of 1870, when two small platefuls of rice symmetrically embellished with peas and pimento appear at our elbows.

"Y aquí la sopa seca." The dry soup.

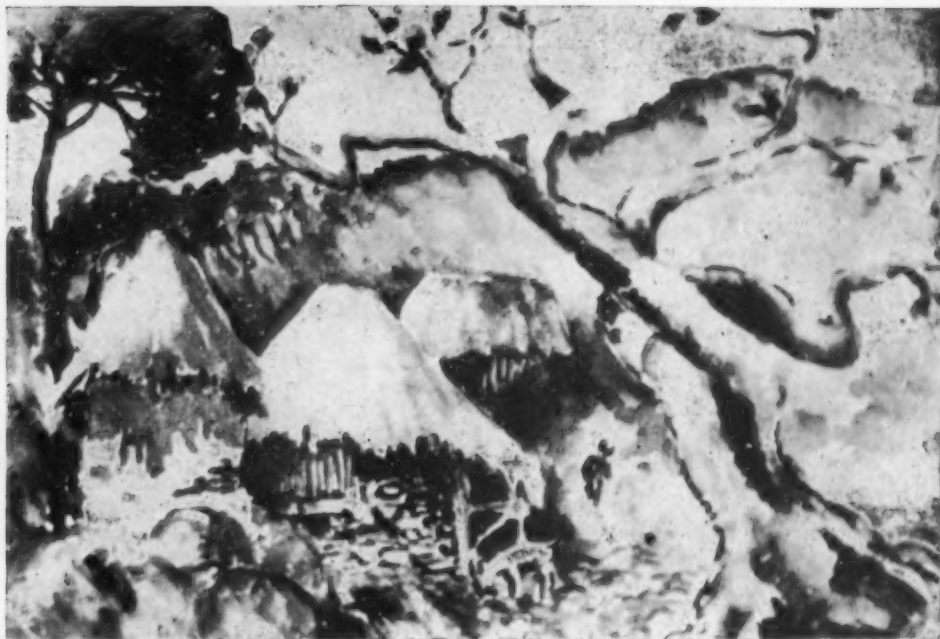
We are still trying to enjoy the wet one, when the eggs are there: two flat, round, brown omelets.

Nothing is whisked away before it is finished, only more and more courses are put in front of us in two waxing semicircles of cooling dishes. Two spiny fishes covered in tomato sauce. Two platefuls of beet stew with spices. Two bowlfuls of vegetable marrow swimming in fresh cream. Two thin beefsteaks like the soles of children's shoes. Two platters of lettuce and radishes in an artistic pattern. Two platefuls of bird bones, lean drumstick and pointed wing smeared with some brown substance. Two platefuls of mashed black beans; two saucers with fruit stewed in treacle. A basket of rolls, all slightly sweet; and a stack of tortillas, limp, cold, pallid pancakes made of maize and mortar. We eat heartily of everything. Everything tastes good, nearly everything is good. Only the chicken has given its best to a long and strenuous life and the stock-pot, and the stewed fruit is too stickly for anyone above the age of six. The eggs, the stew, the vegetables, the salad, rice and beans are very good indeed. Nothing remotely equals the quality of the soup. We are drinking a bottled beer, called *Carta Blanca* and find it excellent. At an early stage of the meal we had been asked whether we desired chocolate or coffee at the end of it, and accordingly a large cupful was placed at once at the end of the line with another basket of frankly sugared rolls. This "pan dulce" and the coffee are included in the lunch. The bill for the two of us, beer and all, comes to nine pesos, that is something under ten shillings.

It is four o'clock and the sun has not budged from its central position in the sky. We do not fool with hats and shade, but return to the hotel by cab. I close the shutters, lie down, and when I wake I do not know where I am nor where I was just now. I hardly know who I am. These pieces of escaped knowledge seem immediately paramount; hardly awake I struggle to fill the blanks as though it were for air. When identity is cleared, I cannot put a finger on my time, this is When? At last the place, too, clicks into place. It must have taken half a minute, a minute, to catch up with my supposed reality. It seemed much longer. One sleeps like this perhaps two or three times in a life and one never forgets these moments of coming to. That intense pang of regret. For what? The boundless promise of that unfilled space before memory rushed in? Or for the so hermetically forgotten region before waking, for the where-we-were in that sleep which we cannot know but which left such a taste of happiness? This time reaction is reversed, opportunity which lies before not behind, adjustment is a joy. I am at the edge of Mexico—I rush to the window. It must have been raining. It has. This is the rainy season, and it does every afternoon from May till October. The square looks washed, water glistens on leaves and the sky is still wildly dramatic like an El Greco landscape. Half the male citizenry is unbuttoning their American mackintoshes and shaking the water out of the brims of their sombreros; the other half is huddling in soaked white cotton pyjamas, their chins and shoulders wrapped in those thin, gaudy horse blankets known as "sarapes" in the arts and crafts. It is no longer hot, only mild like a spring evening. Two hours ago we were in August, now it is April.

I take a look at a plan and set out. I cross the Alameda, a rather glum squareful of vegetation cherished as a park. It was started like so much else in Mexico, in honour of some anniversary of Independence, and its plant life seems to be all rubber trees.

Continued on page 59



Water Color.

By Myrtle Frankovic.

The Last Boat Left Yesterday

By W. P. Covington-Lawson

THE little port of San Juan Mixtepec was squeezed in between the Pacific Ocean and the towering Santa Inés mountains. The mountains, dotted with coffee fincas, small cattle ranchos and upland wheat fields, were the reason for the port of San Juan. It was the only approachable outlet over many miles of that remote region of the Mexican West coast.

The village consisted of a score of small mud-walled, thatch-roofed huts, each surrounded by a fence of organ cactus and flower garden, of a ramshackle hotel called "Las Dos Americas," and a dilapidated warehouse whose galvanized covering was torn loose in places and creaked and flopped during the windy hours of the day.

A hundred feet offshore the ocean deepens precipitously, so that the pier is just that long, and practically worthless for loading. The boats stand off a mile at sea, and the cargoes have to be taken aboard in lighters. The huge billows of the Pacific roll majestically shoreward, slam at the rusty, swaying beams that hold up the pier, and finally reaching the crescent beach rush up the slight incline with a defiant roar.

When the sun pops over the gunsight cleft in the summit of Santa Inés the day begins suddenly at San Juan. Glaring with a baleful eye at the scraggly little port, its first breath is like a sulphurous belch from some hidden oven of hell. Immediately the sandy road that wanders crookedly from the slopes of the mountain to end at the rickety pier, becomes alive with shadow patterns cast by the fronds of coconut palms and huge leaves of the bread-fruit trees that grow at its sides.

Little clouds of vapor rise from a hundred puddles left by the night's rain. Land-crabs scurry for

shelter among the fallen palm-leaves. Dogs seek the shady sides of houses. Hogs wander, sniffing hopefully, down the street. A few skinny chickens peck in the dust. Buzzards, perched on the ridge of the warehouse roof, jerkily stretch their wings and yawn. Day had come again to San Juan Mixtepec.

* * *

I had been waiting for the boat that was to take me out of San Juan, which was bobbing like a waterlogged beetle a mile off shore. Something had delayed its departure. As I left the hotel on this particular morning, the clerk told me that there would be a further delay of probably two more days—something about quarantine.

As I stepped from the veranda onto the road, the smell of rancid lard being heated for breakfast filled the air. I could not stand the thought of the usual morning meal—two disconsolate eggs floating in this evil smelling grease, a couple of soggy rolls, and a cup of coffee brewed from the lees of a tanning vat—so I walked up the road wondering if I might find a place where I could get a more palatable breakfast.

Just as I turned into one of the narrow lanes that wind toward the mountain, I noticed a man shuffling along ahead of me followed by a scrawny dog. His figure did not resemble that of a native, and when I caught up with him I could plainly see that he was an American. He was untidily dressed, but his clean-shaven face had a dignity of a sort, a furtive, calculating, defeated kind of dignity. He paid no attention to me and did not offer a greeting. But when I said "Good Morning," he turned his head, looked at me steadily for a moment and replied in a soft, cultured, modulated voice: "It is a good morning, isn't it?"

When he continued on his way, I was taken aback, for he had the earmarks of the "typical tropical tramp" I had met so often in my travels—the type of fellow who at the slightest sign of recognition would begin a song of despair, ending up with a whining plea for a loan.

Intrigued by his odd behavior I caught up with him again. "Might I ask you," I said, "if there is a place here where I can get a breakfast. The meals at the hotel are atrocious."

He looked over his shoulder. "I am on my way to the house of some friends," he said. "They might fix you up something. If you care to come along I will do what I can. It will be good, wholesome food, and if you have the usual qualms of the foreigner, they have eggs and coconuts. Both have shells that are impervious to most germs."

I thanked him and followed. We passed along a lane that was lined with hybiscus and organ cactus, and stopped at a low, whitewashed palm-thatched cottage. We were greeted by a middleaged woman of the coastal Indian type, neatly dressed in an embroidered blouse and loose skirt. "Don Felipe," she cried. "We have missed you. Come in, come in—you and your friend. It is such a pleasure."

"Thank you," my companion answered. "I am glad to be with you, Maria. The gentleman is hungry, but not hungry enough to battle with the food at Dos Americas. So I brought him along. Perhaps your eggs will be fresher and your beans softer, no?"

"But sure," she said smiling. Please sit down. My husband will soon be here. And now, with your permission, I will see about breakfast."

As we made ourselves comfortable in low bamboo chairs, I studied my companion's face. It was a rather interesting face, with a thin, well-shaped mouth, a firm square jaw, a wide forehead and steely grey eyes. He was composed and silent.

"I envy you," I began, "You seem to have real friends here."

He smiled. "I am very fond of Maria and her people. They are good, kind folk. I have taught some of them English. I really do not know just what good it will ever do them here, but they seem to feel that it gives them something that their neighbors do not have. I get some sort of satisfaction from it."

"You are an American?" I asked.

The silence for a full minute was oppressive. "Was," he finally answered.

"You have been here a long time?" I ventured.

"A very long time," he answered slowly. "It is my home. I am just not the salmon type. I shall not try to swim back to my native creek. It is rather a long swim."

We were soon putting away a most delicious and subtly aromatic omelette, accompanied by tortillas that also had an especially agreeable flavor. When I praised the food and its exquisite odor and flavor, he remarked laconically, "Herbs. Herbs that are but weeds to the unknowing."

After breakfast we stayed a while talking with our hostess, then wandered down to the pier. My tiny black beetle of a boat seemed to be settled deeper than ever in the water. Natives were wading through the surf carrying sacks of coffee, bundles of hides and other stuff on their heads to be loaded aboard the launches that carried them out to the boat.

As we stood there looking on, I again thanked my strange companion for the delightful breakfast. "I should like very much to have you join me this afternoon for a drink at the hotel," I added. "I do hope that their beverages are better than their food. I will be leaving in a day or two, and having become fond of this country, I should like to know more about

it from someone like yourself who has lived here a long time and seems to know and love it."

He looked up suddenly, with indecision, seemed about to refuse, then said abruptly, "Right. Thanks," turned around and walked away.

* * *

We sat in the hotel cantina talking through the whole afternoon, till it grew dark and the bar-boy lighted a stinking brass lamp. We talked of many things—native customs and ethics, the strange religious mores, the pristine forms of life in these coastal regions—without ever touching his personal life. And though I cautiously avoided referring to his past, presently, as if suddenly yielding to an impulse for self-disclosure, as if reading my thoughts, he said, "I suppose you are wondering about the circumstances that brought me here and why I have remained."

"When I came here I represented some important coffee interests in the United States. I came across this little isolated port and the coffee plantations strewn about the mountains behind it. I liked my job and saw a chance of making headway. I got on with the people, and in a rather short time became something of a power. Before very long I managed to consolidate imports and exports and get all of the growers into a loosely tied but effective group. For a while I even controlled the port. All this perhaps went to my head. I knew everybody for miles around and seemed to be welcomed everywhere. I went to all the fiestas, danced, drank, had fun, but avoided any kind of serious entanglements. There were quite a few young females with whom I could contrive a little secret adventure—daughters of men with whom I had business dealings—so I played the field. I managed to steer a course that kept me off the rocks or from going stranded on the beach."

"Among my many clients there was one whom I could never quite compass. He was a descendant of an extremely proud Spanish family which dated all the way back to the Conquest. After generations of settling and resettling, they finally came to rest, about two hundred years before, on a plantation here, whose boundaries were the ocean, the mountains and two rivers, twenty miles apart. The family fortune dwindled somewhat in the hands of succeeding owners, some of whom cared more for Madrid and Paris than their ancestral acres. The ocean, the mountains and the rivers ceased to be boundaries, and so by the time my friend Don Anastacio became the owner, the estate made up some ten thousand acres planted to coffee. His family consisted of Doña Maria, his meek and faded wife, his son Miguel, who spent most of his time and almost all of his father's money in Madrid, and Dolores, his daughter."

"I had bought Don Anastacio's coffee from the beginning, and was a frequent guest at his home. I had watched Dolores grow from a pert, mischievous little elf to an exquisitely beautiful girl, then to a gloriously lovely young woman. I was treated with friendly reserve by her parents and as a family friend by Dolores. But suddenly I found myself desperately in love with her, and I knew, without even a word from her, that she loved me."

"I was incessantly tortured with an inner conflict, and seeking riddance, forced myself to make a trip to the States. I thought that perhaps among my own people I would get a clearer perspective, a soberer outlook, take hold of myself. . . . But when I returned and saw her again, I knew my flight had been useless, that I was lost, completely, irretrievably lost. I loved her beyond all reason, beyond love for my family, my country, my future, heaven itself. Like

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Tempera.

By Salvador Conde.

The General and the Flat Tires

By John W. Hilton

IT WAS one of the hottest days I ever experienced in Mexico and we were on a long stretch of dusty road, fifty miles from a town, when we had our first blowout. It was a new car. We were "babes in the woods" at that time about tires, and believed the salesman when he told us the four-plys, which came as standard equipment, would last a good long time. There seemed no point in changing them. This salesman didn't know much about back-country Mexican roads; nor did we, at that time.

We had managed to make the trip down with little tire trouble, in spite of the misgivings of the natives, who said we should get six-plys before we left the railroad towns. The treads still looked good; and we were heading for home, full of false confidence, having given those casings a terrible beating over rocky roads that were never meant for anything but burros and carts.

It was a tough place to change a tire but Howard and I got out and put on the good spare, which we had used only a few times. We also had a spare tube, to save patching, in case of a puncture. We decided that we would buy another tire, as soon as we came to Magdalena, where such things were for sale. We were a bit worried, since we hadn't passed a car all morning; but there was nothing to do but keep going and hope for the best. The long stretch of desert land, dotted here and there by clumps of discouraged-looking cactus, seemed to begin and end nowhere. The red dusty road disappeared ahead in a silvery mirage that looked like a small lake, preceding us at exactly our pace, enveloping brush, cactus, and occasional mesquite trees as it traveled; reflecting the higher tops in its mirrored surface, exactly as if they were flooded. The red dust came up through the floor boards and into the windows in greater quantities; since we were traveling slower. The wives said they looked a sight; and for once, we were forced to agree with them.

We had traveled perhaps three miles when the second blowout came. We were really in a spot. There

was no shade of any sort. The sun was almost directly overhead. This time there was no spare; but we did have a spare tube. We examined the blown-out casings. Both were cut badly on the inside, from going over rocks and stumps of brush in the hill roads. There didn't seem to be much choice. We took the one with the smaller hole, and cut a piece out of the other, to make a boot. This was a heart-breaking slow process, with nothing but a large-bladed pocket knife; but we finally accomplished the apparently impossible. With the tire pumped up and running again, we really traveled slowly, and held our breath at every bump.

Our wonderful repair job ran us five miles, by the speedometer, and blew out again. We both got out and looked dejectedly at the tire; now things were really bad. Still, no one had passed on the road in either direction. Suddenly Howard brightened.

"Look, John, it didn't blow out in our patched spot. If we can only repair one of the tubes, we still have a chance."

Hope springs eternal, even in the breath of an entomologist and an artist. We used up all the patching equipment and part of one tube, in fixing the other; and were just starting on the laborious problem of whittling out another boot, when we saw dust coming down the road behind us. It might be help.

We brushed as much dirt off our clothes as we could, and suddenly became conscious of the fact that neither had shaved that morning. What a sight we must present. Our car was bulging with camping equipment, and everything, including our wives, was covered with red Sonora dust.

"What if they won't stop?" we wondered, and looking ourselves over, decided that we could hardly blame them.

The car did stop, however, and when the cloud of dust sifted away, we found ourselves in the presence of a Mexican General and his driver.

"You are turistas?" he inquired, seeming not at all to notice our awful appearance.

We told him that Howard was collecting insects, and I was painting pictures.

"Ah," he said, "the paintings I should like so much to see; but of the 'insectos' I have already experienced a sufficiency. But enough, gentlemen! I see that you are in trouble; it is the summer heat, and these so terrible roads. I, General Elguerra, am completely at your service."

We figured, rapidly, how many tires we would need, and the approximate cost. Suddenly we came to the realization that we didn't have that much cash on hand; and we had spent all of our traveler's checks. Explaining our situation to the General, we said we could telephone our customs broker at the border, to okay a personal check for the tires.

"This will not be necessary," he snapped, "my endorsement on your check will make it acceptable; and it will be a pleasure."

Then he turned, smiling, to the car.

"It is very hot and unpleasant, here, in the dust. If the Señoras will be so gracious as to accompany me, there is a hotel where they can refresh themselves and wait until the tires are brought and their car arrives."

The General was calling the shots. It was his party; and we felt that the only graceful thing to do was to agree to his suggestions.

It was with some misgivings, however, that we saw him disappear through the glittering mirage ahead, with our wives and a signed blank check on the First National Bank of Coachella, California.

About two hours later, a car came roaring back from the other direction. It contained our tires and two soldiers, who insisted that they were under orders to mount the tires, and that we were not to help. They knew their stuff; the tires were soon on, and we were rolling merrily along the road which miraculously became better in a few miles. For the first time in weeks, we were actually doing forty miles an hour.

We found the girls at the hotel. They had been shown a room where they could take real baths, and didn't even resemble the wives we had so recently parted from. The General, they informed us, had rushed on to the border to keep an appointment, but

left his telephone number in Nogales; and asked that we call and let him know how we made out, regardless of the hour.

The hotel owner refused payment for the use of the room, since we were not sleeping in the beds; and assured us it was a pleasure to be of service to "friends of the General." That night we stopped in a hotel on the Mexican side of the border. The customs had closed. We called; and the General asked if it would be too much trouble to see the paintings I had made on the trip. We assured him that it would be a pleasure, and after cleaning up, and eating an excellent dinner, we presented ourselves at his hotel. Several other officers were present. After very formal introductions, they began setting up my unframed paintings, around the room, on various pieces of furniture. Their appreciation—like that of almost every Mexican I met—was flowery, but apparently genuine.

There was a sudden exclamation from the General, as he took another oil sketch from the stack and held it up for everyone to see.

"That you look well at this picture, compañeros, I beg of you. It is in this town that I was born, near this very spot. It is a miracle! There is the sierra that reflects the morning light, and those uvalama trees that I played under as a boy. And look! The tower of the church, on the left over that building—que perfecto, que bonito!"

I had hoped that the General might admire one of the pictures more than the rest, but this was more luck than I had expected. Naturally, I gave it to him. He protested; but I assured him that it was the happiest kind of a coincidence, and I would not feel right if he did not accept it as a token of my esteem and gratitude.

He called up some other friends, and ordered a couple of pitchers of beer. We sat in the then crowded room and talked, as the new arrivals looked over the paintings and admired the General's gift.

Howard mentioned the fact that he did not believe that a General of the United States Army, in a hurry to reach an appointment, would have stopped and offered such aid to Mexican tourists on our highways; especially if the strangers were as dirty as we had been. The General expostulated:

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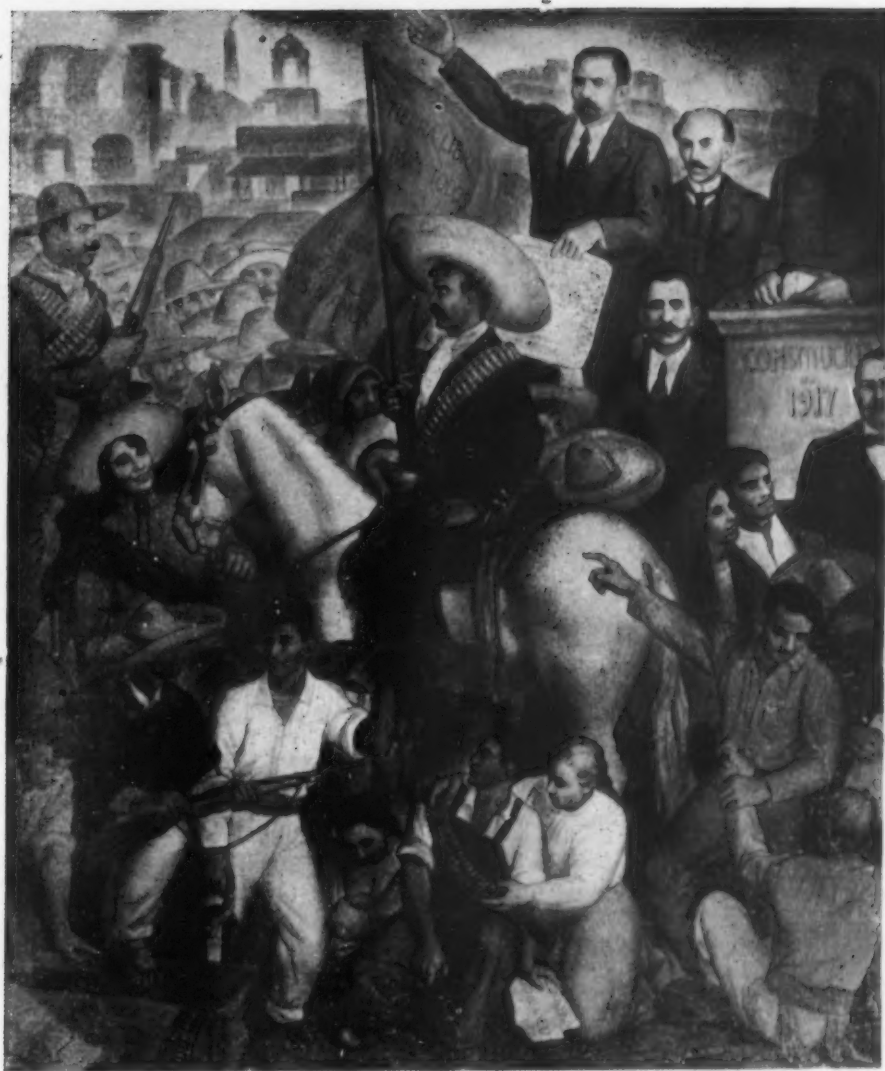
Humming-Bird

By Padraic Colum

UP from the navel of the world.
 Where Cuzco has her founts of fire,
 The passer of the Gulf he comes.

 He lives in air, a bird of fire,
 Charted by flowers still he comes
 Through spaces that are half the world.

 With glows of suns and seas he comes;
 A life within our shadowed world
 That's bloom, and gem, and kiss of fire!



Mural Detail.

By José A. Menrey.

The Way of Democracy

By Tomme Clark Call

ESTADOS Unidos Mexicanos is a fully democratic federal republic, similar to that of the United States, in form if not always in fact. The fundamental law is the Queretaro Constitution of 1917, which supplanted the Juarez Constitution of 1857; it can be amended by a two-thirds congressional vote ratified by two-thirds of the states legislatures.

The three layers of government are federal, state, and municipal. The nation is composed of 29 estates, two territories, a Federal District, and, of the 1940 census, 2,325 municipalities. Lower California, North, one of two territories on the peninsula of Baja California, was declared a state by the Mexican Congress in December 1951. Each layer of government is confined to its logical jurisdiction, with a large measure of theoretical home-rule for states and municipalities. Each state has its own constitution, subordinate to and generally resembling the federal model.

Separation of powers is provided in the federal and state governments through three branches, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. The chief executives and legislators are popularly elected by universal male suffrage. Women are entering offices at all levels, however, and are guaranteed suffrage

and participation in municipal government. The higher courts—headed by a 21-member Supreme Court of Justice—are legislatively, or indirectly popularly, elected permanently, and, in turn, appoint inferior tribunals for limited terms. A college of circuit courts was created in 1951, and the judiciary's budget was increased by half. Following the Revolutionary slogan —'Effective suffrage; no re-election'—federal officials are ineligible for re-election, as are all governors and the legislators in some states. Municipal officials are barred from consecutive terms. Doubt remains, after the Obregon tragedy, about whether a President may be returned to office for a non-consecutive term without violating at least the spirit of the Constitution. Any President's attempt to perpetuate himself in office almost surely would touch off violent objection.

The President is the chief executive of the national government, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and usually, as in recent years, the real personal leader of the dominant political party. Having a term himself of six years, the President appoints a Cabinet of thirteen department secretaries, two federal agency directors, and the Attorney General. The

Cabinet is administrative, individually and collectively advisory, and responsible to the President. The *Secretaria de Gobernacion* boasts the chief Cabinet member, functioning in the capacity of a United States Vice President, which office Mexico does not possess, and serving as the official link between the federal and state administrations.

The *Secretaria de Gobernacion* is usually translated as Department of Interior, a misnomer where comparison with the United States Department of the Interior is implied. It is better translated literally, as the Secretaryship, or Department, of Government. It dominates the national election machinery, acting in official support of the government party. It resolves complaints against state governments and intra-state governmental disputes, except those under Senate jurisdiction. And it helps co-ordinate the President's policies as carried out by other federal departments.

In fact, the so-called Secretary of Interior is, in effect, deputy President for domestic affairs. He takes a leading role in the formulation and execution of the administration's domestic program, while keeping the dominant political party's fences mended in every state. This office, since Revolutionary generals have faded from the political scene, has become the logical springboard to the Presidency. It affords the necessary training, political contacts, and party and popular confidence. Presidents Miguel Aleman and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines both were groomed in this manner.

That function of the *Secretaria de Gobernacion* may largely account for the smooth continuity of the Avila Camacho-Aleman-Ruiz Cortines administrations, assisting Mexico's recent progressive social, economic, and political development. Until such time as a genuinely responsible and sufficiently strong opposition shall out-mode Mexico's 32-year-old one-party system, that process of Presidential succession is perhaps the most salutary one now feasible.

The national legislative body is bi-cameral, with a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. Deputies serve a three-year term, representing a set number of inhabitants in their respective states, each of which has at least two deputies. The Federal Electoral Board and *Secretaria de Gobernacion* were studying census data in 1951 for a reapportionment. The states and Federal District have two senators each, with six-year terms, the entire Senate being renewed at one time.

The federal chambers fix their own rules and make the final judgments on their memberships. In addition, the federal Senate—or its permanent interim committee—has the strange and ramified power to resolve differences between two branches or any state government, to declare anarchy in a state and pass on appointment of a provisional governor pending new election, and to try state functionaries who abuse their authority.

The state governments are similar in structure to the national governments, with governors, judiciaries, and legislatures consisting of chambers of deputies. Under the jurisdiction of their respective constitutions, they have their own legal and taxation systems. The Federal Constitution requires that they maintain 'popular, representative, republican' forms of government.

The 1917 Constitution did away with the *jefe politico* districts, the Diaz subdictatorships. It based local government on the free municipality, which was for the most part smaller in size and greater in number than the old divisions which largely still serve as tax-collecting and judicial districts. The municipality is governed by a municipal council elected by

direct popular vote for a two-year term. The number of council members varies among municipalities. The municipal president, sometimes directly elected and elsewhere selected by the councils from their own membership, has considerable local authority. The council hires a secretary, treasurer, and other official as needed. Municipal judges are appointed by the council or directly elected, and in rural areas rule as often by custom as by law.

The municipalities administer their own revenues from taxes fixed by the state legislatures and are legal corporations. Outside of those basic federal specifications, the states may lay down rules for their municipal governments. Municipalities are both rural and urban, and range from less than a thousand inhabitants to Mexico City. No authority lies between them and the state. In other words, Mexico does not have two layers of local government, city and county: those functions are consolidated in the municipality.

Mexico has a unique addition to local government in the elected officials of the *ejidos*, who are responsible to the general assembly of the *ejido* membership. Thus the *ejidos* are a political as well as an economic grouping in Mexican affairs. Federal official contacts at the local level are primarily in the fields of agriculture, public health, and education, in co-operation with state agencies.

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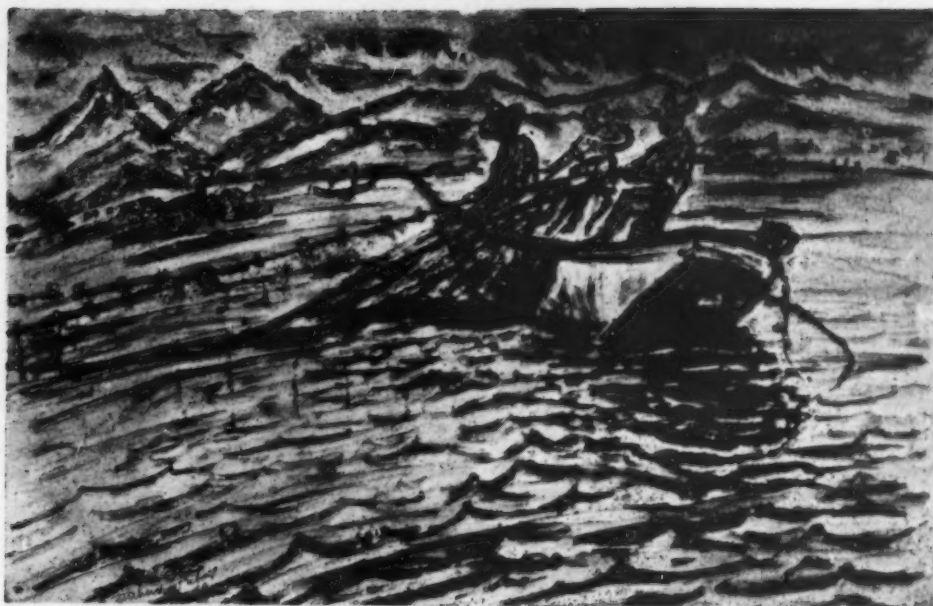
The long-range general trend in Mexico is definitely toward truly representative government. The Mexican system still is sadly subject to the possible ascendancy of a non-benevolent dictatorship, but a succession of administrations such as the past three, and the present, can develop political mores eventually to stabilize democracy. Forces in Mexican national life are working toward that ideal.

The spread of free public education should in time develop a democracy-minded electorate that will refuse to tolerate any government not representative of the popular will. Ignorance is an indispensable silent partner of machine rule in politics. As the people become more enlightened on public issues and more conscious of the individual's political rights and responsibilities, the ballot box should become an increasingly determining factor in Mexican politics.

Economic development is a further democratizing force, despite its centralizing effect on government under the current program. The base of the electorate is being broadened and diversified. Where once the army and the clergy could sustain a ruling power, organized labor and the agrarian movement now must be added. Industrialization is adding a strong entrepreneur class and a growing middle class of technicians, government workers, small businessmen, clerks, highly skilled laborers, professional men, and service personnel. At present, there is considerable farmer-labor-business agreement on the industrialization aims of the government. The day may not be far distant, however, when the government party no longer can embrace in its fold so many conflicting economic interests, compelling official respect for an opposition party, or parties powerful enough to share governmental authority through peaceful influence and even to win free elections. Poverty, another silent partner of machine rule, is under attack.

With further economic development, the enhanced and diversified national income should provide enough potential federal revenue eventually to permit something like adequate financing for state and

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Water Color.

By Arthur Faber.

Zihuatanejo

By David MacNeil Coren

ZIHUATANEJO is a small fishing village on the tropical west coast of Mexico some 150 miles north of Acapulco. Zane Grey once wrote that it has "more authentic South atmosphere than the South Sea Islands themselves." It is pronounced Seewhatenayho and means "place of the filthy lady," because an Indian chieftain who used to go there to swim once asked directions of a remarkably dirty old lady there. There are still plenty of dirty old ladies there, and some dirty men, and almost no tourists, dirty or otherwise. There are thousands of game fish in the adjoining Pacific waters.

I first heard of Zihuatanejo while I was in Acapulco, bored with the Miami Beach atmosphere of the place and nearly ready to go home. It sounded like a tropical paradise and I was delighted when I was offered a ride there in a station wagon with an American woman.

We had three flat tires on the trip up to Zihuatanejo from Acapulco, and three coming back. This about par for the course, which consists of winding dirt and stone roads filled with ruts and oxen and dust for at least half the way. The first half of the road is macadam paved and is quite passable although certainly not first class. We had three rivers to ford, and encountered no difficulties here although during the rainy season they would no doubt be impossible to cross.

It took us a day and a night and part of the next day to travel the rugged 150 miles. We stopped frequently to enjoy the scenery and also were halted for about four hours in the early morning by a ford which we couldn't see by night and had to wait for light to cross.

We had been warned about the possible unfriendliness of the natives of the rugged state of Guerrero. They turned out to be, if not exactly affectionate, at least not unfriendly. The only unfriendly attitude we encountered was that of three drunken, bearded and vicious looking peons of whom we foolishly asked

directions at 2 a.m. in the village of Petatlan. These men followed us along the dark, narrow streets to the ford in the river, where we were forced to halt, and one of them pounded on our windows and shouted something at us incoherently while the others stood in the shadows nearby. It is hard to say what they had in mind; in all likelihood they just wanted someone to talk to. Anyway, we came to no harm.

We arrived in Zihuatanejo tired, hot, dusty, and hungry, greeted by barking dogs and grunting pigs in the narrow dirt streets. The town looked just like all its miserable predecessors on the long road up, until we saw the beach and the blue bay with the broad stretch of Pacific beyond, and the sailboats in the harbor and the rugged hills on three sides, and the palm trees and the thatched huts—and then we knew that Zane Grey was right.

There are three hotels in Zihuatanejo; the Belmar and the Casa Eugenia, both on the beach which forms the main street of the town, and the Catalina, high on a hill about a mile from town (over miserable roads). The Catalina is the only one of the three which meets the standards of most tourists; however, the others are clean and their food is acceptable. They are primitive (camp cots, one bath for everybody), but acceptable for the adventurously minded.

A professor from an eastern U.S. university and his wife had been staying at the Belmar for a month, loving every minute of it. They didn't look like adventurers, but they had the kind of spirit that laughs at minor inconveniences and relishes the unusual.

Other guests included a party of middle-aged Texans who departed on burros for the back country to look over timber prospects. They returned prematurely, told of how rough things had been, and left for home. There was also a young couple from Texas who liked the rugged life and had spent two weeks on a desert island 10 miles up the coast. These people all came in via their own cars and expected to leave the same way, if it killed them.

Another way to reach Zihuatanejo is by the tri-weekly local plane from Acapulco. A far cry from the Super-Constellations and the Strato-Cruisers, this is still a safe way to get in and out of the place, if you don't mind riding with a planeload of peons and their animalitos. A globe-trotting middle-aged woman arrived this way, all by herself, and put up at the Catalina for a week, so it can't be too bad.

Aside from the plane service, or your own car, or a native bus which undoubtedly has more animalitos than the plane, the only way to get to Zihuatanejo is by private yacht or plane. A few wealthy people do visit the place in that manner, lured by the fabulous fishing in the Zihuatanejo waters. The handful of more adventurous travelers and the handful of millionaires are the only gringos who visit the place.

It is certainly worth all the effort of travel to see Zihuatanejo, if peace and quiet, or lovely beaches with no noisy crowds, or thrilling deep-sea fishing appeal to you.

There are four main beaches around the Bay of Zihuatanejo. The one at the village itself offers calm, protected swimming with almost no surf. The sandy strip of beach also serves as the main street of the village, so you must share it with burros and oxen and barefoot natives. Madero is a small, protected beach about a quarter of a mile from town. Then Ropa—a mile-long crescent of sand guarded by a cocoanut plantation and overlooked by the Hotel Catalina. There is light surf at Ropa, but absolutely no undertow or tide to worry about. It is a splendid beach and would be mobbed by hordes of sun-and-sea worshippers if it were located near one of our large cities. As it is, you share the beach with nothing but a few small crabs, an occasional passing burro, and your thoughts.

The finest of all Zihuatanejo's fine beaches is Las Gatas, a sharply sloping semi-circle of gleaming sand farther out along the bay, accessible by boat or burro-path. Centuries ago a 107-year-old Michoacan Indian king named Calsonsin discovered the place and decided to make it his own. Afraid of sharks, he had his subjects construct a breakwall of rocks, thus creating a small lagoon of crystal clear, calm water. The breakwall still stands and the lagoon is as lovely as it must have been in Calsonsin's time.

* * *

Equipped with an underwater swimming mask, you can paddle along beneath the surface of the lagoon and watch hundreds of bright colored small fish undulating among the rocks. For the more adventurously minded, bigger thrills await outside the break-wall in the deeper waters of the bay, where sharks and manta rays abound. Once, when I paddled out a considerable distance from shore on a surfboard borrowed from the Hotel Catalina, I was startled to see a huge manta ray pass directly under the board and swim just beneath the surface, a few feet in front of me. I believe I established a new world's record for surfboard paddling in my dash for the safety of the beach!

A family of natives lives in a house on Las Ga-

tas beach, earning its living by tending the cocoanut plantation which borders the sand. They are friendly people who will gladly whack open a cocoanut for you with their machetes so you can drink the sweet, refreshing milk. You're not to eat the meat, though—that will be dried on the beach and then hauled off on a burro for shipment to the outer world.

Probably the greatest attraction of all in Zihuatanejo is the unparalleled game fishing in the thousands of square miles of virgin waters which extend up and down the coast a hundred miles. There are sailfish in unlimited quantities, most of them around ten feet long. Marlin are hooked frequently while fishing for sailfish, although there aren't enough of them to warrant a special effort. Fishing boats can be chartered at the village.

There are dozens of varieties of fish that will take artificial bait; casting, spinning or trolling. They range in size from the little cociñeros of a pound or thereabouts, to big pargo. There are Spanish mackerel, barracuda that strike with the speed of lightning, robalo or snook which often weigh 35 pounds and spend a great deal of time out of the water in great six-foot leaps when they are hooked. There are also gallo, or rooster fish, with three-foot dorsal spines and yellowtails and dolphin and bonitas and many, many more.

For bird-lovers there is also a tremendous treat—lands off the coast a short distance from Zihuatanejo where thousands of brightly colored macaws make their homes. These birds, similar to parrots but larger and more graceful, are incredibly lovely in flight. They always fly in pairs, close together and perfectly coordinated. The huge rock islands of the macaws have turned white because of the accumulated bird droppings over the years.

The hills around Zihuatanejo offer splendid hunting if you're interested in wild boar or deer. A lone American has made his home on a lagoon south of the village and he makes his idyllic living by hunting and fishing. He might be induced to act as a guide, although this is strictly a personal matter between you and the man, as he doesn't have to do this for a livelihood.

For further information on this paradise for hunters, fishermen, swimmers or just loafers you can write to Luis Morales in Zihuatanejo. Señor Morales is commissioner of fish for the village and also acts as a one-man chamber of commerce, tourist bureau and welcoming committee. He speaks good English and can be very helpful in a dozen different ways.

This article would not be complete without some mention of Sra. Berta Osbahr. She's a sort of Mexican Grandma Moses whose paintings have won prizes in Mexican exhibitions. She and her pet parakeet live in a cozy cottage on the beach. Señora Osbahr loves to set up her easel on one of the lovely beaches and paint peaceful, simple scenes of water and palm trees which are down-to-earth and inspiring in their simplicity.

There is one last thing we should point out: the odds are roughly ten million to one against Zihuatanejo, ever being A-bombed, H-Bombed or any other kind of bombed.

Patterns of an Old City

A WALK IN THE RAIN

By Howard S. Phillips

THE midwife brought along a batch of newspapers, and now she began to spread them over the floor around the iron bed.

"And this?" Saldivar asked. "What is this for?"

"Blood," the woman said. "Some times there is blood. Messes up a place."

The words echoed through Saldivar's tortured mind, rousing a final, dreadful, desperate hope. Blood. Some times there is blood. It may end like that. There may yet be a way out, a liberation.

A moan which started feebly and grew into a drawnout lament came from the bed. "Calm, child. Calm. You 'll be all right. It 'll all come out all right," murmured the midwife with professional placidity, as if talking to herself. "It 'll all come out all right." She stood up, surveyed the room through the dim light of the solitary bulb suspended from the ceiling, and shook her head thoughtfully. "I could do with more light," she said. "Like to see what I am doing. Good thing I brought my flashlight. You might hold it for me when the time comes. Never can have too much light at this work. Now, let's take these things off this little table. I 'll be needing it."

"Yes, sure," he said, talking in a daze. "Sure." He removed from the table the little flowerpot with its half-wilted geranium, the carton shoebox with thread and needles and scraps of cloth, and some frayed, paperbound books, carried these things one by one to the adjacent kitchen, placed them over the cupboard, then watched the midwife as she opened her battered satchel, took out a clean white towel, spread it over the table, and arranged over it a collection of scissors, scalpels, spindles of gauze, a roll of cotton, some enameled trays and a variety of bottles. Again a feeble moan which was stifled before it grew into an outcry came from the bed.

"Ya, ya," the midwife muttered. "It's all right. Everything is all right." But the moan commenced again and this time in repeated frantic gasps it rose to a shriek. Shuddering, with a hand limp and moist with cold sweat, Saldivar touched the woman's shoulder. "She is . . . She is . . ."

"She 'll be all right," the woman said, and, as if they were alone in the room, as if only he could hear her, continued quite casually: "It's the first-born and she is very young. It might be a little hard. It's always like that. But she 'll come out all right. It's only the beginning of the heavy pains. But it 'll be some time yet. Late in the night maybe or early toward morning. You 'll have to hold yourself. Just wait till it comes. Why don't you brew yourself some strong black coffee? Easier to keep awake."

"Why yes," he said. "Sure. Strong black coffee." Vaguely recalling that he had hardly eaten a bite of food through the whole day, he went to the kitchen, paused to collect his mind, gropingly fanned the embers in the charcoal stove, found the coffeepot, poured some ground coffee out of a tin can into its perculator, filled it at the hydrant and placed it on the stove. He wiped the oilcloth on the table with a moist rag, placed on it some cups and saucers, and spilled in the middle some rolls of sweet bread out of a paper bag. Yesterday's bread, he thought. Forgot to stop at the baker's today.

"It 'll be well, while you are at it," the midwife spoke from the other room, "to fill a pot with water

—the biggest pot you have—and put it on the stove. We 'll be needing plenty of boiled water before long."

"Yes," he answered, his voice sounding in his ears like an echo. "A big pot of boiling water." These, he thought, are the practical things I must do, must remember, the things I must do while we are waiting, waiting till it happens some time during the night, some time between now and morning, when it happens and is done with, and everything will be cleared up and decided.

The words, cleared up, done with, decided, insistently repeated themselves in his mind bringing him back to that one stark and agonizing question for which it had no answer. He only sensed that something enormous—something which lay beyond the margin of his will or power—was being decided, something that would either relieve him of his plight, set him free, restore in him the person he used to be, or hold him bound irredeemably. And then, for the thousandth time, the other, the final bewildering query—but do you really know? Are you really sure? What is it you crave? Is it freedom or bondage?—emerged in his mind and likewise remained unanswered.

An anguished moan rose from the bed in the other room, and the pain it voiced reverberated through his body and in a silent echo passed through his throat.

* * *

That evening, on the way home from his work, Saldivar was caught in a heavy downpour, and he stopped under a store-awning to wait for it to pass. As he stood there, his eyes wearily fixed on the watery gloom, mildly regretting the lack of a raincoat or an umbrella, mildly disturbed by his aversion for leaping overflowing gutters, for waterlogged shoes and damp clothing, and by his susceptibility to colds, he became aware that among the huddled group of others who sought shelter under the awning there was someone whose personality was asserting itself, was emerging from the nebula of anonymity into a palpable presence.

A young girl in a flimsy, thoroughly drenched dress stood at his side, involuntarily pressing against him, so close that her wet, disheveled hair brushed against his face. He sought to make room, but her body swayed limply against him as he moved aside, as if actually needing support, making him conscious of a tremor of chill that seemed to be coursing through it, conscious of something forlorn and totally helpless, arousing in him a strange feeling of concern and commiseration.

He seldom spoke to strangers; he fearfully avoided encounters with women who sought approach on the street; but now he found himself waywardly impelled to say something, to remark about the rain, about it being rather bad for one to have to be out at a time like this. She stood at his side saying nothing. "You let yourself get wet," he continued, "and now if you don't watch out you might wind up with a cold." He was instantly irked with himself for saying these words, for he felt that they were unnecessary and pointless, and was relieved by her continued silence.

The downpour presently subsided to a steady heavy drizzle, of the kind that would probably last for

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Ixtaccihuatl. Photo

By Gilberto Meneses.

The Sleeping Princess

By E. Adams Davis

WHEN the pale moon goddess rises over the Valley of Mexico to bring the strange though wondrous love-malady to Indian, mestizo, and white alike, she paints with purple and blue and pearl the twin peaks which lie off to the eastward on the mountainous rim of the Valley of Anáhuac, the tall, mysterious cone that is Popocatepetl and the lengthy fragments of prehistoric craters that are Ixtaccihuatl.

Popocatepetl, still smoking fitfully as if disturbed in his slumbers by disquieting dreams, is the ancient tzin—the old chieftain of the Aztec legend; Ixtaccihuatl is the sleeping princess who will one day, with the passing of the centuries, be awakened by the kiss of her aroused lover. According to the old Nahuatl myth, when this happy day dawns, the aged dynasty of the Moctezumas will return to the valley of the lakes and the white-skinned invaders will forever be banished from its soil. The myth had been a prophecy long before the Spanish came: the Aztecs believed it as they fell beneath the lances and guns of the conquistadores; and the descendants of a dozen score of tribes who were vassals of the "People of the Sun" still believe and retell it to their children.

The details of the legend have changed considerably since the days of Cortez and Alvarado and the other knights of that little band of intrepid conquerors, but the main elements have survived a thousand years of telling and retelling. The tale is a common one of primitive peoples, and legends of a sleeping princess who would some day be awakened by her chosen prince have been recounted by Hittites, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Germanic tribes, and by the early Anglo-Saxons of England. They all differ in detail, but the predominant story plot is the same. Today, if you wander through the sierras that circle the Valley of Mexico and hear the story from an In-

dian shepherd, his account will bear marked similarity to that told by the truck gardener of Xochimilco or the dirt-begrimed farmer in the rolling hills of old Tlaxcala.

In an age long past there lived an Aztec princess, very beautiful and exceptionally talented, skilled in needlework and all the other household arts practiced by those favored daughters of notability.

Shortly before she reached marriageable age, her father, a great monarch and an enlightened man for his time, came to her apartments and detailed his plans for her marriage. It was his will that she should choose for a husband a prince of the Aztecs; under no circumstances would he give his permission to an alliance with a foreign noble, for he wished to consolidate the Aztec lines of royalty. He promised that she should have the right of selecting her husband within these limitations, a decision which was indeed liberal, for at that time the head of a royal or noble house usually selected the husbands or wives of his children after consulting and arranging the proper dowry with the head of the other family. The Princess was very happy and, bowing before her royal father, told him that his trust in her was deeply appreciated and promised that he would have no occasion to regret his kindness.

As days passed into weeks and weeks into months, the Princess had opportunity to study one handsome noble after another; but her choice was limited, for according to the ancient Aztec law, she could marry only into one of the very few select families of the nobility. The Princess and her little coterie of friends often discussed the problem, and the search for a suitable prince became a sort of game; names were selected and the qualities of those mentioned were listed for the benefit of the Princess. Sometime she had ne-

ver seen the young man whose name was proposed to her and from the description formed a favorable impression, only to have it completely shattered when she met him. At last it became evident that she could find no one among the Aztec nobles to whom she could give her heart.

She told her father what had happened, that she had searched diligently and had not found the man of her choice. Would not the kind father give his permission to look beyond the Aztec nobility? There were royal families of other tribes, very honorable and of undefiled blood, and perhaps she could find a prince among them of whom her father would approve. But the old King was inflexible—he could not be moved from his decision—and the little Princess was very sad.

One day word came that a Chichimecan prince was planning to visit the city to engage in business transaction at the great market, and her curiosity was aroused. She flew to her maids-in-waiting and told them of the impending visit and that she wished to see this prince when he came to Tenochtitlán. The details would have to be arranged only after careful planning, for naturally no foreign prince had the right even to look upon the countenance of a female member of the royal Aztec house. The maids promised to help her and immediately put their pretty heads together to plan the unlawful meeting.

The day arrived when the Prince was to visit the city. Shortly before the hour of his entrance, the Princess ordered her litter and set out, on a round-about way, to the park which was her announced destination. She directed the route through one of the very narrow streets of the city and there, as chance seemed to have it, she encountered the entourage of the Chichimecan Prince.

The Prince reclined upon a golden litter. He was a handsome fellow, and to her quickened heart she admitted that he was the most attractive man she had ever seen. He was tall and well proportioned, with a bronzed, muscled body indicative of a man of action accustomed to sports and to hunting the tigre high in the mountain fastnesses. His classic features outshone those of any of the Aztec noblemen whom she had met, and his flashing dark eyes indicated clearly a man of strong will and stern resolve. He was clothed in the most royal raiment and dominated his large retinue with impressive dignity.

The street was so narrow that the two litters could not pass, and the Prince, with a pleasing gesture of courtesy, alighted and stood respectfully to one side that the Princess's litter might continue undisturbed. How handsome he was standing in the bright sunlight, and how his eyes danced and sparkled! And how polite, for he could not have known that he was moving aside for the royal Aztec Princess.

The Princess did a daring thing. She did not lower the curtain of the litter as was the custom, but when it passed the Prince, she gazed at him frankly, memorizing his features with a single glance. And he, natural man that he was, gazed straight into her eyes. His burned into her very soul, and, seeing that he was disturbed, she felt a crimson blush arise on her cheeks and lowered her head with modesty. He took a slight step forward, then halted in his tracks, for he divined at once that she was a princess and knew well the barrier between them under the ancient Aztec law. The maids-in-waiting immediately saw the flush of suppressed excitement pass the Princess's cheeks. They were aware, too, of the Prince's admiration for their charge and hurried the litter on its way. But the damage was done; the Princess had seen the man of her dreams.

The Prince continued to the market-place, but his trading was not good, for his mind would not dwell

upon the quality of the blankets, nor upon the price asked for the delicately worked articles of gold and silver, nor upon the exquisite featherwork from faraway Pátzcuaro or Uruapan. His thoughts constantly returned to the beautiful Princess, whose lovely features were imprinted so firmly upon his heart. He ordered his slaves to bring his litter and returned through the streets, across the causeways, and up the winding, treacherous trails to his capitol high on the slopes of old Ajusco, for his people lived in the mountains that ringed the southern edge of the Great Valley. As the litter moved slowly along the pathway, he pondered over the situation, much angered at the ancient barrier which separated the Chichimecas and the Aztecs; but, bowing to the inevitable, resolved to forget that radiant face and put the Princess from his mind.

Weeks passed and the usually happy Princess became languid and moody. The royal father worried about the state of her health and finally sent her off to the chinampas of Xochimileo, those flower-laden, floating gardens of enchantment. A brief vacation, he felt, would restore her from the clutches of the malady and return her usual animation.

The Prince, instead of forgetting the Princess as he had resolved, found himself in a continually agitated state of mind. The maidens of the Chichimecan nobility no longer pleased him, and his thoughts constantly returned to the lovely Aztec Princess. He wished to see her gain, to test the love which he felt in his heart.

* * *

Perhaps the Princess did not wish to see him? No, that could not be true, for he had looked deeply into her eyes and had seen a willingness there. The King would certainly not consent to their meeting, and if he heard of a rendezvous, it would constitute a breach of state threatening war between the two peoples. The Prince, of course, sought only a happy outcome and consequently laid his plans in deep secrecy.

Calling aside a trusted friend, the Prince told him of his love for the Aztec and dispatched him to Tenochtitlán as a spy. When the carefully disguised noble reached the capital, he mingled with the tradesmen, the fishermen, and with the servant classes, and ere long struck up a friendship with a trusted servant of the royal palace. To him he finally revealed the object of his mission.

It so happened that the servant was well acquainted with one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Princess, and one night he whispered to her that an agent of the Prince of the Chichimecas was in the city and that he wished to arrange a meeting with her royal mistress. Entering eagerly into this intrigue, which augured hymeneal bliss, the maiden ran to the Princess and told her all that had occurred. The Princess knew at once that the Prince was well pleased with her and in her own heart knew that she loved this royal noble from the mountains.

The other ladies-in-waiting were called in, and with many sighs and giggles they planned and schemed until at last they found a way in which a meeting could be effected between the young couple. On a certain night the Prince was to come disguised to an obscure side door of the palace, where he was to be admitted into the garden by a trusted servant. The Princess would meet him in the shadows of the great ahuehuate trees.

The emissary then departed for the royal palace on the mountainous slopes of Ajusco, where he related the plan to the Prince of the Chichimecas.

On the morning of the scheduled day, the Prince dressed himself in the garb of a mighty, hunter, with

a tigre skin across his shoulders, a stout loincloth of spun maguey fibers, and strong sandals of softly tanned deer hide. His servants rubbed his bronzed skin until it glistened.

With a bundle of skins thrown carelessly over one arm, he set off for the Valley of Mexico and entered the city without difficulty. The guards thought him a mighty hunter come to sell his skins at the market. When night had fallen, the Prince carefully worked his way along the dark streets and across the bridged canals to the side door of the palace. The trusted servant opened the portal in response to the signal, and the Prince entered the garden. It was a piece of magic. Beneath the mighty ahuehuete trees pale shadows flitted among the multicolored flowers and delicate shrubs; moonbeams danced over the walks and through the mists from sparkling fountains; the sweetblossomed perfume of the night was in the air. The spell of the love goddess was everywhere.

The servant softly closed the gate and resumed his position of watchfulness. The Prince walked slowly down the path which led to the inner recesses of the garden. Suddenly he stopped, for there, seated on a low marble bench almost surrounded by the blossoms of bougainvillea, he beheld the Princess of his dreams.

She was dressed just as on the day he had first seen her, in a flowing robe of finely spun, white maguey linen. Brightly colored embroideries edged the low-fashioned neckline, the flowing sleeves, and the full skirt of the garment. Her jet-black hair was carefully dressed in the usual custom of the Aztecs, with two tightly woven braids hanging down the back. She wore no jewels. The classically beautiful features of her face were softly etched by the moonlight. She was sitting quietly, lost in thought, and as she did not see him, the Prince had a full moment to drink deeply of her beauty. In that moment he knew that he loved her.

Impulsively he took a step forward, and, hearing the movement, she raised her eyes. He stopped, and they gazed earnestly at each other for a moment. That was enough. The Princess ran forward, and the Prince folded her in his arms.

Hours later he retraced the trails that led to his kingdom in the mountains. During the following days he pondered what course of action should be taken and at last, after calling his councilors and advisers, he drafted a letter to the King of the Aztecs telling him of his love for the Princess and asking for the privilege of her hand. Upon receipt of the letter the old King fumed, for the Chichimecan Prince well knew the Aztec law and that his people were held in low esteem by the Aztecs, even to the extent of being called "the Dog People." Ordering his daughter to be brought before the throne, the King raged in a manner never before experienced by the Princess.

But she was the true offspring of a proud race and told her father frankly that she loved the Chichimecan and that he loved her, that he was the man of her choice and under no condition would she marry anyone else. This bold statement so infuriated the old King that he ordered her confined to her apartments in her palace where she would receive visitors only with his specific permission, for he believed his daughter, being quite young, would thus be able to reflect upon the seriousness of marrying a foreign prince and would in time forget this passing fancy.

Months passed, with the Princess supposedly in close confinement. But the guards loved their beautiful charge beyond their loyalty to the King and were easily persuaded to permit the Prince to enter the apartment whenever he appeared at the side entrance in his disguise as the mighty hunter.

The Princess lived from visit to visit, and though both were impatient at the delay, they hoped that something would develop to make their marriage possible. The old King, however, was a very shrewd man and read in his daughter's eyes that something was amiss. He stationed spies outside the gates of the palace, and one night they saw a strange figure, dressed in the tiger skin of a hunter of the mountains, enter through the narrow door. They relayed the information to the King, who, from their description, immediately recognized the person as being the Prince of the Chichimecas. He said nothing but soon worked out a plan to rid the palace of this rash intruder.

It happened that at this time the Aztecs were engaged in war with a coalition of enemies. The King wrote to the Prince offering the hand of his daughter in marriage if the Chichimecas would come to the assistance of the Aztecs and vanquish the enemies. The Prince readily assented and soon arrived in the Valley of Anáhuac with a large contingent of Chichimecan warriors. The generals of the King, who had full knowledge of the plot, so planned their strategy that the Prince and his forces would hold one flank of the army which, by a skillful withdrawal of the Aztec forces, could be cut off and annihilated. By this maneuver the Prince would be killed and the vexing problem settled.

The great battle was fought as planned. The flank was isolated from the main body of troops, which retreated, and the small forces of the Prince were left to battle alone against the enemy hordes. But the King had underestimated the fighting prowess of the Prince and his Chichimecans. After a long, bitter struggle they won the battle, routing the forces of the enemy who opposed them. The Prince then returned to his capitol to make arrangements for his coming wedding with the Princess in accordance with the King's promise.

But the King was a treacherous old man; he would not give his daughter. He sent word to the Prince that during the war his daughter had been stricken of a strange malady and had died; and at the same time he told her that the Prince had been killed during the battle.

But the Prince was not convinced of the King's integrity, and he sent spies into the city of Tenochtitlán, the capital of Aztecs, who soon returned with the knowledge that the Princess was indeed alive, though saddened almost unto death because she believed him dead, and that her father still kept her confined closely to her apartments.

Again the Prince went down the mountain trails from the slopes of Ajuseco to the city, disguised on this occasion as a simple tiller of the soil. An agent had paved the way for his admittance through the side door to the garden, and he sent a message to the Princess that he was awaiting her. The guards of her apartments readily let her pass, and running down the stairs and through the halls, she came into the garden where her lover stood with outstretched arms.

They talked until the morning mists were settling over the city and arranged that on a certain moonless night the Prince was to come for her with a litter he would leave without the gates of the city. Thus they would elope to be married, and afterwards perhaps the old King would relent and give them his blessing.

So it was carried out, but they had planned and reckoned without realizing the stubbornness of the old monarch and his reluctance to change the ancient laws of the Aztecs. When they returned to the palace the next morning, he refused to see them and issued a terrible command: making them outcasts, he ordered

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Primitivo

By Dane Chandos

WE WERE suddenly very conscious of the existence of the jail, for Cayetano's buddy Primitivo was in it. It seemed that, returning home toward eleven at night, he met a friend of his, somewhat drunk and on the point of quarreling with several others in the same condition. Primitivo took his friend home and then went back to his own house and to bed. But the next morning he was sent for by the comisario. This was a new comisario, one Don Fidencio, who, as the owner of cattle and property, was a prominent citizen and was displaying considerable energy. He had imposed a curfew, insisting that villagers be in their houses by eleven, and, in the interests of public order, he had given each of the four divisions of the village a chief and a subchief. Primitivo was put in jail while his friend and the drunks were rounded up. But then, in Mexico, innocent bystanders are often kept in prison as witnesses, pending the investigation of a crime or accident. At midday Primitivo was fined two pesos and his friend five.

"Paz hasn't a centavo," said Cayetano, "And since she jumped out of the window"—Paz had eloped with Primitivo some years before—"it has given her family much anger and she can't go to them. She doesn't know what to do, and Primitivo's father hasn't any money in effective, so can I have two pesos from my bank, please?"

For two years now, in an effort to make Cayetano save money, I have kept, from time to time, such small sums as he manages not to spend out of his weekly pay. Two or three times this savings account has reached quite respectable proportions, but twenty pesos seems to be about the limit. Once this is reached, there are always a number of sudden small expenses that reduce the balance to mere centavos again. It is rather like the old game of snakes and ladders. One or two good tips from guests, a skillful deal with his fishermen friends over a question of some kilos of whitefish, or even a week's careful living, these are the ladders up which his bank balance mounts. Then the snakes sting it—a new pair of shoes must be bought or a brightly colored shirt for party occasions, a fiesta is held at San Antonio or a friend is married, and Cayetano is once again at the foot of the financial ladder.

I gave him two pesos. "But how unfair," I said. "Why should Primitivo be fined?"

"It gave him much anger," said Cayetano, "and me too. But what can we do? You see, with most comisarios the fines are for themselves, but Don Fidencio is rich and he wants to paint the school, so the money goes for that. If he has people in the jail, he has the labor too."



Oil.

By José A. Monroy.

Cayetano was worried about the fine, but he evidently saw nothing extraordinary in the comisario's methods of collecting fines and workmen.

"But has the comisario a legal right to impose a curfew?" I asked. "Surely that is done only when martial law is proclaimed."

I could see the sense of the rule, however, even if it were illegal and I told Cayetano so. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps it is good," he said. "It keeps order. Of course it does not apply to us or the señores, your guests. It's for the villagers and country people from outside, who don't know how to behave and get drunk, causing disturbances. That way it is very good. But as for Primitivo, he has done nothing wrong at all."

The comisario's job is not an easy one. He has to tread a middle path. He has many duties to perform and must be firm, but the village will not tolerate officiousness.

I remember one comisario who considered himself unable to deal with certain difficult cases and hired the services of a tough for this purpose. Although the village didn't much care for it, all went well until the first fiesta. The tough got violently drunk and started a fight. He stabbed several people, and only the force of numbers prevented further casualties. He was overpowered and taken off to jail. The comisario became the laughing stock of the village and shortly afterward resigned.

His successor did not fare much better. He was turned out for being too energetic. This was little Don Pedro, whose reign coincided with the building of my home. He loved Ajijie, he was a good man, and his sense of justice was keen. One day an Indian boy, a foreigner from another state, came to the village to stay. He had money and he spent it, and he often got drunk. In his cups he was boastful and, no doubt, somewhat lacking in courtesy toward Ajijie and its people. Certainly, one evening, when he climbed our wall brandishing a gun and shouting that he had full powers from the President of the Republic to

shoot whom he liked, his manners were more than dubious. Cayetano pulled him down by the heels, and he spent the night in jail, apologizing in the morning in the prettiest way imaginable and making the improbable statement that he had drunk seventeen bottles of tequila. I suppose he would have apologized just as prettily if he had killed somebody. He was not persona grata in the village, and one night he was found in the street with seven dagger wounds in his body. Don Pedro, who had heard all the noise from his house, told his family to open the door and see what was the matter. Now, if a villager hears cries in the night, he burrows under his sarape and looks to see that his door is bolted; he does not go out and investigate. There have been too many revolutions and bandits for that. Besides, to go out means that you have intervened, and even if you don't get into the fight, you will get into the inquiry about the fight. Don Pedro, however, urged his family to go out and see who was groaning in the street. But he himself was ill in bed, his family was afraid, and nobody opened the door.

So the boy bled to death. Two men, universally considered the culprits, confirmed suspicion by fleeing to the mountains.

Now in Ajijie there are no soldiers and no police. Authority is vested in the person of the comisario, usually elderly, and his young secretary. When somebody is intolerable, the village takes the law into its own hands. Nobody knew who started the fight on the night the boy was stabbed, and indeed Don Pedro himself declared later that, even if the boy had

been the President's own brother; he had asked for what he got by his overbearing manner. Nevertheless, he sent to Chapala for soldiers.

They stayed in Ajijie for a week—two of them with an officer. In the daytime they searched the hills, returning at sundown to bathe and wash their clothes on the beach. They were very clean and self-reliant. I talked to them one evening. They both liked being in the army; one, I think, because he felt important, and the other because he saw so much of the country, having often been sent as a guard on trains. They had both recently been out for some weeks in the wilder parts of Jalisco, down toward Ciudad Guzmán. The method was to send a detachment out from one town bound for a distant one. On the way it stopped in each village, and if there had been a crime they stayed until the affair was closed or the criminal caught. Thus their tours were of uncertain duration, and meanwhile they had to look after themselves, cooking, washing and mending on their own.

One evening the soldiers didn't return from the hills until late, and soon the news went round that they had sighted the murderers and shot them. Though there is capital punishment in Mexico it seldom operates, and murderers are often "shot while trying to escape." The village, however, resenting interference from Chapala, was much pained by the swiftness and savagery of the reprisal.

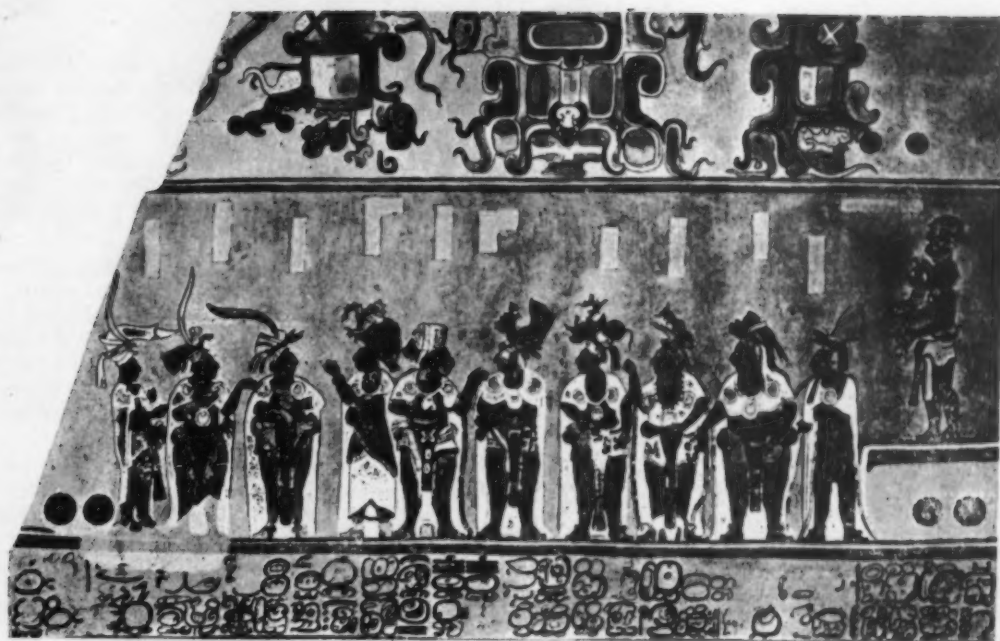
"Why," they said, "it wasn't a bad murder at all."

And Don Pedro, too, was forced to resign.

The Wine Gold Weather

By Annette Patton Cornell

HER love went by in the gold, gold weather,
 Sun aslant on his dark, dark hair.
 Her love went by with no sign whether
 or not he saw her standing there.
 Her love went by with a low, low whistle,
 song on his lips that she could not know.
 And rough the ground and sharp the thistle
 for her who sees her dark love go.
 Her love went by in the wine gold weather,
 no sidelong look in his arrogant eyes.
 Now she is lost in the gold, gold weather
 with dark, dark dreams... and gold, gold lies.



Mural Painting at Bonampak.

Books of the Ancients

By Mary Slusser

AS THE CLOISTERED MONKS of medieval Europe tediously created their remarkable illuminated manuscripts with vellum, quill, inks, and paints, the same process was being used on a continent as yet unknown. Far away in the still, green depths of the Guatemalan and Honduran jungles and in the cool Mexican highlands other religious functionaries, devoted to other gods, were also laboriously recording the deeds of men and the glory of deity through the medium of illuminated manuscripts.

Actually, we know neither when nor where writing, paper, or books began to play their important role in Middle American culture. The famous Tres Zapotes monument and the Tuxtla Statuette, both from the coastal plain of southern Veracruz, Mexico, bear inscriptions; but the dates that have been assigned to them—21 b.c. and 62 a.d., respectively—are rejected by many scholars. These scholars feel instead that at least the place, if not the time, of origin is indicated by the stone monuments erected early in the fourth century a.d. at the great Mayan ceremonial centers of Tikal and Uaxactun, in the Guatemalan Petén. But the fully developed chronological system and already highly conventionalized writing displayed there suggests that writing must have made its appearance in Middle America considerably earlier. Possibly some perishable medium, such as wooden stelae, long since destroyed by the inexorable jungle, antedated the stone stelae as a means of Maya record keeping.

The fact that toward the end of the ninth century a.d. the Maya no longer erected their character-

istic carved and dated stelae suggests that by then they had largely turned to the more readily handled media of paper and books for recording religious, calendrical, and historical data. In the succeeding centuries, as the influence of Maya culture spread, all the advanced Middle American groups—Toltec, Zapotec, Mixtec, Totonac, Aztec—had writing of some kind, paper, and books.

The paper they used, called huun by the Maya and amatl by the Aztec, was made not from maguey or agave, as often has been erroneously supposed, but from the fibrous inner bark of the wild fig, processed by stripping, soaking, beating, and drying. The thin sheets of dried bark paper were burnished to give a hard, non-porous surface, and both sides were sized or coated with a starchy solution to provide a smooth, glossy writing surface. Indeed, Maya huun-paper is considered far superior in both texture and durability to Egyptian papyrus, that famous writing material from which so many European languages derive their words for paper. The Mexican tribes (Mixtec, Zapotec, Aztec) often employed smoked deerskin in their book-making, but there is no evidence that the Maya did so.

The manuscripts, or codices, as they are customarily known, were made by folding the long bark or skin strips like a miniature screen or road map. Usually both sides of the folded strip were drawn and painted upon, but some manuscripts have occasional blank pages. Manuscript sizes vary, but the average page was about seven to nine inches high by four or five inches wide. Unfolded to full length the manuscripts were quite long—the Maya "Codex Tro-Cor-

tesianus," for example, contain fifty-six leaves (112 pages) and measures twenty-three and a half feet when fully extended. Others are even longer. Many were provided with protective end covers of hide or wood, which were sometimes inlaid with precious stones. All the codices, both Mexican and Mayan, are polychromatic, using various shades of red, blue, green, yellow, and brown, and—especially for outlining pictures of humans, animals, or objects—a lustrous black.

* * *

Maya writing is a conventionalized graphic system in which ideas are expressed sometimes through actual pictures of the idea to be conveyed (pictographs) but more often through stylized glyphs that symbolize ideas but do not actually picture them in detail (ideographs). Mayan pictographs consist largely of elaborate polychrome representations of gods, men, animals, and various material objects. The ideographs, for the most part, are exceedingly complex human and animal (god) faces and heads, hands, shells, and so on, so stylized that they bear little resemblance to the ideas they symbolize. Phonetic writing—syllabic rather than alphabetic—was nascent. For example, the glyph symbolizing the sun, "kin," appears combined with other glyphs to express a second which includes the "kin" sound, such as Yaxkin, a month name. The Mayan vigesimal system of numeration is expressed in two ways. The simpler uses bars (which have a value of five), dots (value of one), and usually a conventionalized shell for zero; the other, a series of stylized faces of gods to represent the numbers zero to nineteen. Long, complex calendrical and astronomical computations are expressed by position in vertical columns instead of the horizontal lines of the Arabic system.

Although the Spanish Bishop Landa described Maya writing as "the work of the devil" in his remarkable treatise "Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán" (Narrative of the Affairs of Yucatan), written about 1566, he did set down sufficient data to help the great nineteenth-century Maya epigraphers partially decipher it. But so far, including all inscriptions whether from codices or monuments, only about one third of the glyphs have been deciphered—chiefly the signs for the twenty named days of the calendar, for the nineteen months of the year, for the number zero to nineteen, for the four directions, for some gods and ceremonies, and, with a few others, for some heavenly bodies and astronomical phenomena.

* * *

Aztec writing is much more pictographic than the conventional Maya writing. It is primarily a system of rebus writing, in which pictured objects represent sounds. For example, the town of Toliman is depicted not by a drawing of a town but by a glyph consisting of a clump of rushes=tula="Toli") and a (hand=ma="man"); hence, Toliman, "the place where rushes are gathered." Color, position, puns, and abbreviations all played a part in getting sound and ideas onto paper. Ideographs, though rarely as stylized as the Mayan ideographs, were also used; for example, rows for consecutive footprints to indicate travel, scrolls issuing from the mouth to suggest speech, a bundled corpse for death, a shield for war, or a spear thrust through a town glyph to denote its conquest. Numbers were in part expressed by dots, as with the Maya, and by other symbols such as a flag for twenty, a pine tree (or feather) for four hundred, or the ceremonial conal pouch for eight thousand.

Knowledge of writing, Maya or Aztec, was essentially a priestly prerogative, though not all priests

could write. In addition, the Aztecs, at least, employed scribes to record tribute exacted or received from conquered towns; and Landa, our indispensable source on the Maya, tells us that "some of the principal lords learned about these sciences (astronomy and writing) out of curiosity and were very highly thought of on this account, although they never made use of them publicly."

As a result of the post-Conquest practice of noting down in Spanish, or in Nahuatl written in Spanish script, the meanings of the Aztec symbols, it has been comparatively easy to decipher the Mexican codices. For example, while we are not certain of a single glyph denoting Mayan places or persons, hundreds of Aztec towns and scores of individuals have been identified.

The three extant pre-Columbian Maya codices—the "Dresdensis," the "Tro-Cortesianus," and the "Peresianus"—deal almost entirely with religious matters, astrology (horoscopes and divination), and astronomy and time, as expressed in the various calendars—the tzolkin, or 260-day sacred calendar; the haab, or 365-day lunar calendar; and the famous "Long Count," based on the apparent revolutions of Venus. Though sixteenth-century chroniclers, both native and Spanish, agree that the Maya did keep historical records in their manuscripts, to our misfortune none survived the Conquest.

Fate was kinder to the Mexican manuscripts. There are almost a score of known pre-Columbian, as well as dozens of post-Columbian, codices, many of which are rescripts of original pre-European manuscripts. Their contents are more varied than those of the Maya documents; in addition to the sacred tonalamatls, or almanacs, they include administrative records, such as land grants and tribute records, and especially, the exceedingly interesting and informative annals.

* * *

That so pitifully few pre-Spanish manuscripts survived is understandable in view of not only the loot, loss, and destruction attendant upon conquest everywhere, but the fact that this particular conquest was accompanied by an ardent religious zeal that brooked no other gods than those of Christianity. The good Bishop Landa tells us concerning the Maya codices: "We found a large number of books in (Maya) characters and, as they contained nothing in which there were not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction." His counterpart in Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, in 1529 built a great pyre of codices, including scores from the Aztec archives at Texcoco, and, on his command, zealous monks advanced and put them to the torch. In those flames, in the drifting ash, was lost forever an irreplaceable treasure of native American history and learning.

Some native priests secreted their precious books in the face of Spanish persecution, but it is doubtful whether any thus salvaged will ever come to light. Probably most of these were ferreted out by the fervent monks soon after the Conquest. We know, for example, that the chance discovery in 1562 of a cache of codices and idols in a cave at Mani, Yucatan, brought on Landa's famous Inquisition and resulting auto de fe in that city. Any codices that miraculously survived these determined attempts to stamp out "idolatry" would doubtless have been destroyed during the succeeding centuries by climate and by the hands, gentle but too many, that guarded them.

Nor is it likely that archeology will turn up any in useful condition. Though it is known that manuscripts, along with other paraphernalia, sometimes accompanied a dead priest to the tomb (and indeed laminated polychrome flecks recovered from an archeological excavation in Guatemala probably represent just such an entombment), the intrinsically perishable nature of the manuscripts and the damp and mildew to which they would have been exposed in temple and tomb mitigate against contemporary recovery.

The history of those manuscripts that did survive is shrouded in uncertainty and conjecture. Among the gifts Moctezuma sent to Cortés were two codices, for the records of this tribute sent back to Spain list "dos libros de acá tienen los Indios (two books that the Indians here have)." We know that these actually reached Spain, for the Italian savant Pietro Martire writes of having examined them when, as so much Spanish plunder, they passed through the "Casa de Contratación" in Seville, but we do know which codices they were or what their ultimate fate.

Some codices were surely taken back or sent back to Europe as souvenirs or gifts by the conquistadors themselves. The famous Maya "Codex Dresdensis," pride of the State Library of Dresden, was presented to the librarian of the then Royal Library in 1739 by a private owner in Vienna who considered it "incomprehensible and hence valueless." It is believed to have been brought, along with letters from Cortés and parts of the Moctezuma treasure, to Vienna at the time of the conquest of Yucatan, when Vienna and Spain shared as sovereign the Emperor Charles V.

Another of the Maya codices, the "Peresianus," which actually is no more than a partially destroyed fragment of the original, was discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1860. Wrapped in a bit of dirty paper labeled "Perez" (whence the name "Peresianus"), black with dust, it lay mixed with other old and forgotten papers. But how and when this sad remnant of Maya intellectual achievement came to the dusty chimney corner, no one knows.

* * *

The Spanish preoccupation with proselytizing the natives had an interesting consequence with respect to the lore the monks so diligently strove to destroy. As soon as possible they taught Spanish-style writing to the "converted" native priests, the receptive intellectuals. To accommodate the few Maya sounds which could not be expressed by the Arabic alphabet they even added a few letters, such as the five Father de la Parra used in the Guatemalan highlands. Though this learning was intended only to further the teaching of Christianity, the native priests were quick to turn their new knowledge to their own ends, and set down, sometimes on native paper, sometimes on European, as much of their native history, religion, and learning as they could recall or copy from hidden records. Thus it is that we have the famous post-Conquest Guatemalan documents such as the several "Books of Chilam Balam," the "Popol Vuh," the "Annals of the Cakchiquel," and scores of valuable Mexican documents.

Water Snake

By Ethel Jacobson

SINUOUS among the reeds,
 At my careless tread
 You freeze to utter stillness.
 Your onyx cameo head
 Lifted, searching and aware
 Of alien intrusion
 You lie, a reed among the reeds
 In serpentine illusion.

A charcoal shadow cleanly striped
 With yellow pale as sun
 Slanted through cobalt-headed pines,
 You and the bank are one,
 You pause, and stare... then through the reeds
 You vanish like a dream
 To write your wraithlike going
 In a ripple on the stream.

Adolfo Best-Maugard

By Guillermo Rivas

DURING the days of aesthetic ferment, some three decades ago, when the precepts of a new art were being developed in Mexico, the name of the young artist Adolfo Best-Maugard figured with prominence among the avant-garde of this extraordinary era. Mexico was freeing itself from academic fetters; it was creating a new ethical basis and social justification for art; it was rediscovering its rich aesthetic heritage, and Adolfo Best-Maugard played his part in this liberation and rediscovery.

A painter whose work stood out for its arresting stylization and a highly personal note of subtle lyricism (his self-portrait painted during that period, now shown in the Exhibition of Mexican Art at The Palacio de Bellas Artes, reveals his former manner), Best-Maugard presently abandoned his easel to dedicate himself to the propagation of a theory he evolved after an exhaustive exploration of the forms employed by pre-Cortesian artists in decorative design of sculpture or ceramics. Discovering that this design was based on seven fundamental figures, Best-Maugard—appointed by José Vasconcelos, Minister of Education, to head the department of art instruction in public schools—altered the system of elementary art teaching through the application of this theory. In subsequent years he presented this theory, substantiated with a philosophical treatise, in a book, titled "A Method for Creative Design" (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1926), which aroused widespread attention.

Since then, during an interim of some twenty-five years, Best-Maugard has withdrawn from the limelight, up to a few months ago when he re-emerged dramatically as winner of the first premium in the contest exhibition sponsored by the National Institute of Fine Arts in homage to Hidalgo. His portrait in oil, reproduced in these pages, of the hero of Mexico's Independence, powerful in concept and beautiful in execution, undeniably deserved the high distinction it was accorded.

This was indeed an extraordinary occurrence. Here was the case of a painter who in his withdrawal became something of a legendary figure, who came to be regarded by many as a dweller in an ivory tower, a philosophical theorizer on art but no longer a practitioner—an onlooker who was probably dismayed and disillusioned by the flux, collapse and chaos prevalent in the realm of world's art, by the new narrow regionalism, the trend of mutual imitateness, which has undermined the vitality of the native expression—the case of a painter gone static if not actually sterile, suddenly coming out from his withdrawal with a work of art that in fair competition with many of his outstanding contemporaries obtained the first award.

And so, it turned out that during these apparently barren twenty-five years Adolfo Best-Maugard had never ceased being a painter, that even if through long periods he seldom lifted a brush, he lived in a profound creative-self-immersion, in a prolonged gestation of a style, a form and utterance that could lend his work a spark of vitality, a note of veritable significance, when the day came to resume his task.



PORTRAIT-STUDY. Oil.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.

* * *

When I called on him at his bachelor quarters—a pleasant, ample, rustically comfortable house built on his own design, with a lush garden in the rear that beyond its overgrown invisible fence seems to merge into a single landscape with the towering trees of Chapultepec Park—and saw what he has been doing, I readily surmised the reason why his "Hidalgo" had to win the coveted reward.

"It is in the eyes," he said, "that I have sought to find the essence of the human being. I have explored this very subtle essence through many years and everything I have painted lately has been along the course of this exploration. I build my portraits around the focal point which is the eyes. A man shows everything, tells everything, reveals the hidden substance of his mind and heart, through the light reflected in the iris and retina of his eyes. To recreate that peculiar and elusive light has been my purpose."

He showed me one by one a large collection of portraits or portrait studies, painted in monumental proportions on large fiber panels, heads, three to four times larger in proportion than the normal human size, all posed in flush frontal position, and each developed in a widely distinct, finely harmonized range of colors, in a specifically and highly articulate palette which is appropriate to each given subject.

Unfortunately, the reproduction of paintings in black and white on a greatly reduced scale always provides but a remote semblance, but a mere suggestion of the work itself, and this is especially true in the present case. The several reproductions which illustrate this text cannot convey the profoundly expressive opulence of pigments or the truly monumental power of the composition evinced in the original works.

All of his paintings bear a common resemblance as regards the frontal position of faces and the primary emphasis on the eyes. Yet each has a completely distinct individual character; each defines a widely different tonal mood, each surges from a totally different atmosphere, each presents a distinct and consonant blend of color which lends significance to every inch of space and integrates the work into a composite wholeness. His backgrounds, rich in fine nuance, voice a symbolism expressed not in the obvious form of allusive figures, objects or scenes but in the terms of suggestive color and faint images of objects.

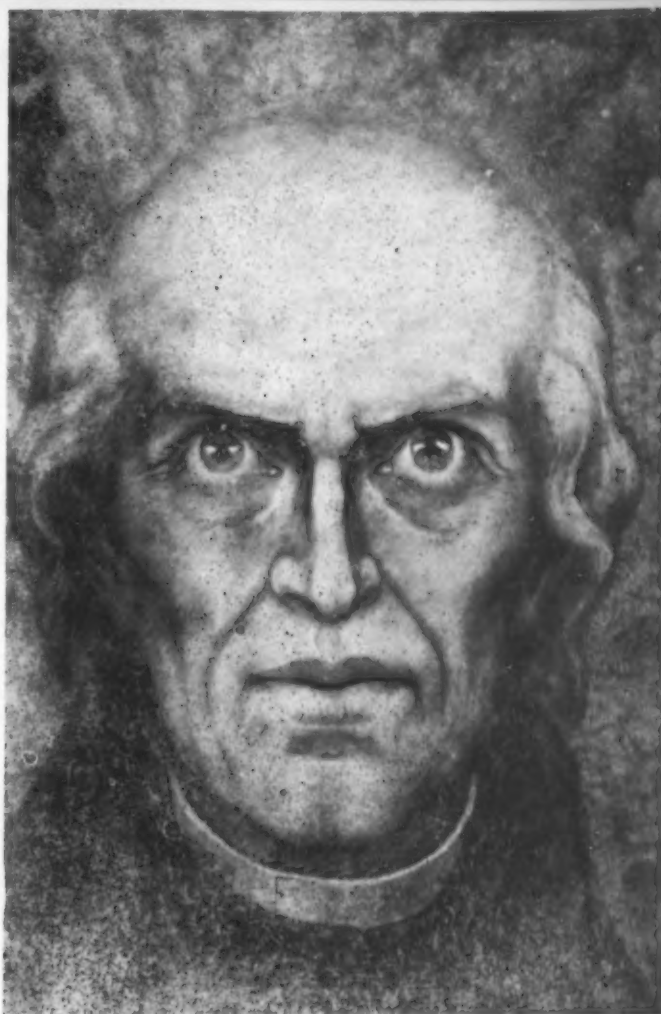
There is, for instance, the superb portrait of Emiliano Zapata, the Guerrero peasant who led his countrymen in revolt against the rule of feudal landlords, who paved the way toward the agrarian revolution, and gave his life to this cause. I have seen innumerable depictions of Zapata: there is, in fact, hardly any among our outstanding painters who has not produced at least



PORTRAIT. OIL.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.

one portrait of Zapata; but I am sure that I have never seen a "Zapata" that can stand comparison with the one painted by Best-Maugard. All of them, whether painted in murals or on canvas, are romanticized versions of one kind or another. They are heroic or legendary sublimations of the person—they define a myth rather than reality. In the portrait of Best-Maugard we see Zapata the man, or at least we see the human image which our own mind readily accepts as the image of the kind of man Zapata must have been. Here, as in all the other portraits, the eyes play the paramount role. We see in these eyes a man incensed with a single fixed idea that liberty for the man who tills the soil can be achieved only through the posses-

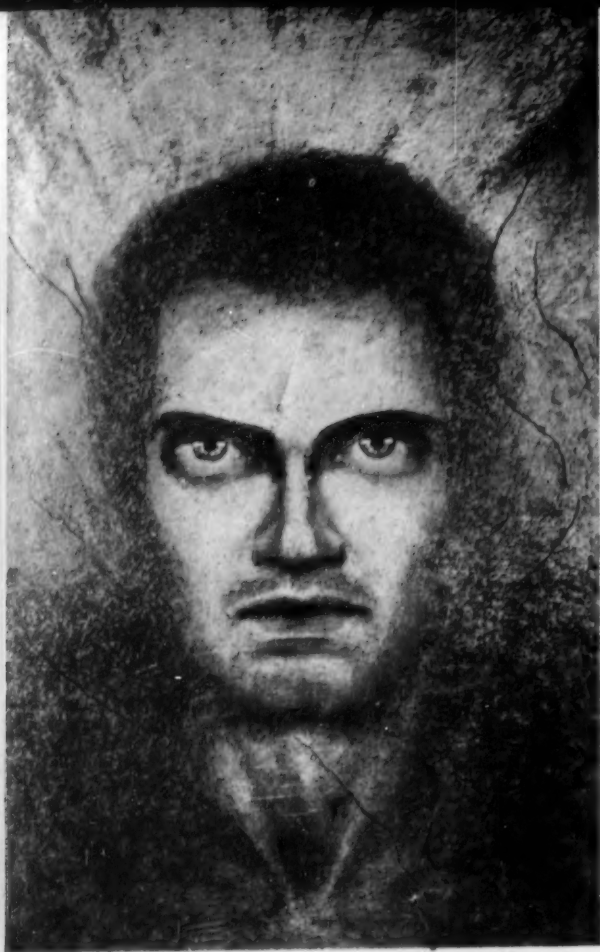


MIGUEL HIDALGO y COSTILLA. OIL. (Prize-winning portrait). By Adolfo Best-Maugard.

EMILIANO ZAPATA. OIL.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.





PORTRAIT OF A YOUTH. OIL.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.

sion of this soil. This, in the mind of this illiterate idealist, is an absolute bedrock premise, the foundation upon which a better life may be eventually built. But, if we probe the inspired luminosity, the stern life-or-death determination pictured in these eyes, we do not find in them the frozen zeal of a fanatic. What we find in their depths, beneath the outspoken valor and fundamental determination, beneath the unassailable conviction of reason and justice, is the inner fear of an unlettered man, the final uncertainty, the ulti-

mate haunting doubt—indeed, as subsequent history proved, a prophetic doubt, a foreboding—the doubt of an essentially humble human being, in the full and practical success of the ideal he pursued.

But the revealing substance of the eyes is greatly enhanced and harmoniously supported by the beautifully, classically molded features of the face—the pristinely articulate mouth, the firm chin, and the thick, flowing mustache, which in those days served as an indisputable badge of masculinity. The expression of the basic idea is completed in the background—in the torn patches of a stormy indigo sky, in the splashes of green which suggest fields of growing corn, in the massed ochres of the red-brown earth. What, in other words, the artist has created in this portrait is not a heroic effigy of a popular hero, but a profoundly penetrating vision of a highly unusual human being.

And the same profound penetration of the underlying hidden human substance characterizes all his other portraits. There is the morning sunshine brightness vibrant in the tenuous gossamer background in the portrait of the young woman with the pale gold hair. Her eyes are sunk in a mist of daydream, but there is a daylight reality in her full, red mouth. There is a fierce interrogation—What now? Where to? What for?—in the eyes of the portrait of a youth—a composite, universal vision of a youth—emerging from a background which suggests a world in strife, in confusion and turmoil. These are the things which imbue this artist's paint with a throb of pulsing blood.

It cannot be said of Adolfo Best-Maugard that he has staged a "come-back" or that he has achieved a brilliant return. What must be said of him is that after many years of self-seeking—years that have been totally impervious to all 'isms or 'ologies, to all passing vogues, ephemeral schools, tendencies or cults—he has arrived, as an artist and a human being, at a final fulfillment, at the ultimate truth of self-expression, a self-expression whose monumental dimensions embrace the veritable substance of humanity itself.

PORTRAIT-STUDY. OIL.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.



PORTRAIT-STUDY. OIL.

By Adolfo Best-Maugard.



Un Poco de Todo

CAN THE SEA FEED THE WORLD?

LAST month it was reported that the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council had been meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, to discuss plankton as a food. Plankton is a generic name for multiple billions of minute plants and animals on which about every creature in the sea lives, from the whale down to the oyster.

Plankton is receiving more and more attention because of the rate at which the world's population is increasing and the fear that in a few decades it will be impossible to provide enough food to go around. Delegates from thirteen countries attended the meetings in Bangkok and learned that Thailand consumes about 5,000 tons of plankton annually.

Back in the latter half of the nineteenth century Johannes Mueller towed a conical net of fine-mesh muslin or silk through seawater and gathered minute forms of animal and plant life. Most of the individual specimens were invisible to the naked eye. That was how plankton was discovered. Hensen, a German, coined the word "plankton," which is Greek for "that which is drifted." It is a good term because, though some forms of plankton can propel themselves, most of them are carried along by ocean currents.

Fish by the millions are caught every year. Big fish devour little fish and these still littler ones until finally we get down to the primal food of the littlest. Suppose that all these millions and millions of fish were land animals. If they had to live on vegetation the whole earth would be denuded in a few weeks, and it would be impossible to sustain life in any form. Think of millions and millions of fish in this way and the enormity of the supply of plankton is apparent. Without plankton, marine life would be as impossible as land life without plants. To a biologist the sea is so much soup in which and on which marine creatures live.

Plankton consists of inconceivable billions of microscopic diatoms, coccolithophores, dinoflagellates and related forms which collectively constitute what some biologists call "floating pastures." The diatoms constitute the "grass" of these pastures. Though only the very largest can be seen with the naked eye, they are Titans compared with the coccolithophores, an important and very ancient group of algae with limy shells. It would take 3,000 to 6,000 of these, laid side by side, to make an inch.

Between the diatoms and dinoflagellates (microscopic plant-like animals) lie tiny shrimp-like copepods and other minute plant feeders of the animal plankton. These constitute what may be called the meat of the sea-soup. The Arctic right whale and the blue whale live on them.

Dr. J. C. Fish, who is on the faculty of Rhode Island State College, says that the plankton eaten in Thailand looks and smells like anchovy paste. He doubts if Americans would like it. An English biologist who has eaten plankton thinks it is an insipid food that would need the ingenuity of a good French cook to make it palatable. But there is no doubt about the nutritive value of plankton both as a human and animal food.

Dr. Daniel Merriman, director of Yale's Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory, pooh-poohs the widely accepted supposition that a world population, which is rapidly outgrowing its food supply, has only to exploit the sea to avoid starvation. In his opinion, world

fisheries will do well if they succeed in equaling the percentage increase predicted for the human population over the next quarter of a century. Total plant productivity in the ocean in any given year is of the same order of magnitude as that of land production. But, Merriman points out, "three one-hundredths of an ounce of algal organic matter in a ton of sea water is a larger-than-average phytoplankton crop at any given time." Future engineering progress will have to decide whether it will be economically feasible to force a ton of water through a fine filter to get several hundredths of an ounce of food, he argues.

Nor does Dr. Merriman see much hope in the so-called Deep Scattering Layer, a concentration of marine life first detected in World War II at middepths.

ELECTRONIC BRAIN'S ONE-TRACK MIND

An "idiot brain"—an electronic computer that can solve only one type of problem—has been designed and built by a 25-year-old psychology student, Frank Rosenblatt, at Cornell University. He needs the machine in preparing his Ph. thesis. When it is not working for him it is doing odd jobs for psychologists and anthropologists at the university.

Rosenblatt plans to give a series of psychological tests to about 200 persons, and may have to solve 20,000 equations before he has the information that he wants. This is no superhuman task nowadays. In two seconds, EPAC (electronic profile analyzing computer) can calculate a problem that would take fifteen minutes with a desk computer.

Rosenblatt's computer does not grade tests, but measures the similarity of the "profiles" or patterns the answers make. Two persons may have identical scores, Rosenblatt explain, but entirely different patterns. On the other hand, a genius and a moron can have similar patterns but quite different scores.

Two copies of a test are run through the machine together, one as a standard and the other to be compared with it. The machine comes up with a number that indicates how similar the two profiles are. The more similar, the lower the number. When profiles are identical the answer is zero.

Rosenblatt is testing the idea that personalities can be classified in a scientific and objective way. After giving various tests to all sorts of people, he will use EPAC to help him find similarities in their patterns of answers. If the answers fall into clusters which are very similar to one another and very different from others, the chances are that personalities can be classified objectively, but if the variations among patterns are on a gradual scale, it is probable that there are no distinct personality groups.

Because the machine compares profiles on any test or rating sheet that has answers marked on a scale of seven points or less, it can be used by a sociologist, anthropologist or anyone else who wants to compare a large number of such tests.

EPAC's answer is the sum of the squared differences of figures on each line of the two sheets it is comparing. For example, a particular line may be marked "6" by one person and "2" by another. EPAC's subtraction on matrix records "4" as the difference between these two numbers, and its multiplication unit finds that the square is "16." These figures for all the lines on the test are added up in the computer's accumulator.

Literary Appraisals

THE SPANISH TEMPER. By V. S. Pritchett. 270 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

IN some sixty thousand words, England's leading literary critic has written what is virtually a pocket analysis of the Spanish character. At the same time this short book manages to cover almost every conceivable aspect of contemporary Spain that cannot be found in any guide.

To undertake such a task few men are as eminently qualified as V. S. Pritchett. He has known Spain for thirty years, has lived and worked there, speaks the language, is steeped in its literature, and has traveled the entire country by foot, bus and train. What's more, he has the eye of a painter and can generalize about the world's most paradoxical people with an air of authority which only a Spaniard would dare to challenge.

After 1936, like many other Englishmen of his generation, Mr. Pritchett never expected to set foot on Spanish soil again. But Spain had smitten him at an early age. The effects of that experience were "drastic and permanent." Thus, twice since 1950 he has returned "to find a country *** overrun by tourists, stunned in mind, but not fundamentally changed."

One reason why Spain has remained fundamentally unchanged is because for centuries the Spanish people have consciously isolated themselves. The proudest nation on earth, they are also the most xenophobic. In this they have been favored by their geographical position. But, writes Mr. Pritchett: "Woe to the foreigner who believes Spain is an extension of Europe."

Only in Catalonia can the perceptive traveler forget the vast influence of the Moors and the fact that Spain had experienced six centuries of foreign occupation before the final conquest, before the expulsion of the Jews and the discovery of America by Columbus. By that time "the Spaniards knew themselves to be more Catholic than the semi-pagan Popes."

And profoundly Catholic they have remained ever since. In Spain's present exhausted condition, says Mr. Pritchett, "the Church is the real political victor, not General Franco." To the Spaniard, the wealthier nations "live in a spiritual vacuum *** with the wrong religion and intolerable ideas." Wait, he says, till they've blown themselves to bits! Then maybe the survivors will "see the irresistible *** advantage of the Spanish way of life."

This egotism, this arrogance, this complete indifference of the Spaniard to what the rest of the world thinks of him is a hangover from the sixteenth century, when Spain was the greatest power in the world.

That the Spanish temper is unlike that of any other people Mr. Pritchett illustrates again and as he takes the reader by bus and train on his journey around the peninsula. He comments everywhere on extremes of architecture, extremes of climate and landscape, the primitive extremes in Spanish folklore and fiction. He notes the Spaniard's passion for formality and talking politics (today taboo), on his genius for excess, his behavior in the bullring, "his static indifference to animal suffering," his strict, puritan attitude toward sex. The Spaniard's love for the extreme of realism in art and the religious symbol is pointed out, as is his equality ("the only real equality I have met anywhere in the world"), and,

above all, on his deep-rooted, eternal preoccupation with death.

We see, then, that the Spaniard is utterly different from ourselves. And yet to this alien, impoverished land thousands of British and Americans flock every year. Why? Because life is cheap? No. "The attraction of Spain to the northerner," says Pritchett, "is its rejection *** of all that we call Progress. *** By indolence and recalcitrance the Spaniards have preserved their individuality. *** (They) have demonstrated that people can survive as personalities without good government *** without compromise, without tolerance."

One closes this book echoing that Spaniard who freely admitted that his indeed are "the impossible people," and in the firm conviction that with a good guide in one pocket and "The Spanish Temper" in the other, the visitor to Spain (and the country itself) needs only one thing more: dollars.

J. S.

TOWER OF IVORY. By Rodolfo L. Fonseca. Translated from the Spanish by Walter Starkie. 279 pp. New York: Julian Messner.

THERE is about "Tower of Ivory" an extraordinary reality that helps us see that nothing in this world is meaningless, suffering least of all. This is shown not in words, but in the drama of the characters. It is a story of love that triumphs over sorrow—a story of a nun who bridged the conflict between the virgin in her soul and the mother in her body. An atrocity of war, rape—transmuted into a modern parable of redemption.

The novel opens with a group of nuns boarding a boat at Shanghai bound for Rome. Their mission has been destroyed by Chinese troops. They carry in their hands the bundle of all their possessions, but within them they bear the shattered brutality of war—worlds dying and worlds in birth. Shepherded by Mother Gabriella, they retire to Villa Cesi, free to make their choice—to remain with the order, or return to their families and the world. Only Juana, after a rebellious clash with Mother Gabriella, rejects the order. The rest remain, linked by what happened to them, as if they were accomplices in a great crime.

* * *

Sister Hilaria, torn with hate and loathing, gives birth to a macrocephalic monster whose death drives her insane. Sister Praxedes bears a daughter, with almond-shaped eyes, exquisite as the sorrow of her coming. "The skin of the child was like the down of a peach and it had a gentle heat of glowing embers about to break into flame." As she touched her baby's face, something different than the love she had hitherto felt for other human beings welled up in her breast. It seemed to her that her years as a nun belonged to fiction; it was only now that she was beginning to live and love. "Why must something so wonderful be a sin?" The novel revolves around her dedication to God and her elemental instincts of motherhood, old and strong as life itself. She was like a flowering garden fated by the brutality of war to become a battlefield between flesh and spirit.

"Tower of Ivory," which won the José Janés International Prize awarded annually for the best first

novel published in Spain, has already been widely acclaimed in Europe. Rodolfo Fonseca has so distilled his life into art that you do not seem to read, you are transported into the private, yet somehow universal inner world of his people, sharing their strange, tormented lives, as if listening to great music.

Fonseca had always wanted to be a writer, but he had the wisdom to make a virtue of necessity that forced him into the practical career of engineering. When he wrote "Tower of Ivory," at 52, what he had to say had matured as naturally as fruit when ripe falls from the tree. Although he had achieved distinction both as a professor of physics and mathematics at the University of Montevideo and as the engineer who built Uruguay's telephone system, when he set out to write, he turned to the early influences of his Jesuit education. But "Tower of Ivory" has consummate craftsmanship and the poetry of truth that transcend the time and place of its religious setting.

A. Y.

SPANISH STORIES AND TALES. Selected and edited with an editorial note by Harriet de Onís. 270 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

WITH verbal accuracy and sometimes inspiration, Harriet de Onís has edited and in part translated a collection of Spanish stories. Those which best preserve the grace of the original are the selections from Valle Inclán, Pío Baroja and the Colombian writer Hernando Téllez. Miguel de Unamuno's story, weak in Spanish, is less obvious and diffuse in English. The Latin-American authors are all interesting, although we miss such names as Arévalo Martínez in Guatemala and Mariano Latorre in Chile. Nor would the book have lost anything by including one of Gabriela Mistral's narratives. Otherwise Harriet de Onís' desire to make some Hispanic authors known in the United States is plausible even if the mixture of Jorge Luis Borges, the "Calila y Dimna" and "Book of Sendebat" of the early Castilian Middle Ages, is somewhat amusing.

Valle Inclán's story is well chosen, revealing a period of the poet. More characteristic of an author and school is Baroja's tale in which a vague lyricism is attained by the suggestions of direct and naked action. Unamuno's short novel in the Anglo-Saxon field—of more open horizons—lacks originality and freshness. Of the three Spaniards of the generation of 1898 in this volume Unamuno is the one who will survive with greatest difficulty, in spite of the obstin-

ate efforts of well-meaning American professors of Spanish.

Baroja and Valle Inclán stand a better chance of survival, Baroja as a cultivated and popular author, Inclán as a rare master. The Clarín story is a rather unfortunate choice, especially when we consider that he was an author who wrote so many stories and such good ones.

On the whole, such anthologies as this tend to provoke confusion and debate. The translators omit some Spanish authors: Azorín, Gabriel Miró, Gómez de la Serna, masters of the genre. Some authors refuse to appear in such collections because they find the narrow pedagogical purpose uncomfortable. These and many other reasons make the compiling of anthologies a modest, sometimes sordid and always complex task.

OUR BROTHER THE SUN. By Basil Burwell 352 pp. New York: Hermitage House.

ONE would expect the "Christmas Revolution" of 1867 in South America to make exciting reading. But Basil Burwell, author of "Our Brother the Sun" has failed to weed out his superabundance of material, and has delved so deeply into so many characters that the reader, jerked from scene to scene and from person to person, loses the impact of the basic story in a maze of philosophies, symbols and abstractions.

Essentially, this is the tale of Cleon Brown, a Yankee who, having revealed the position of a Union whaling fleet to the Confederates during the Civil War,



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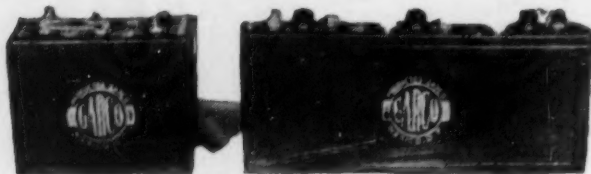
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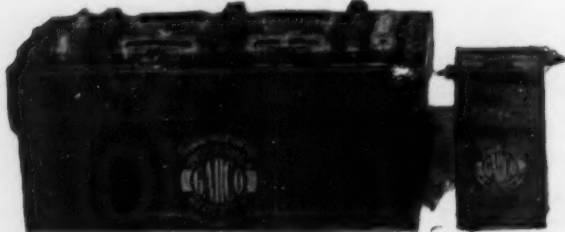
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subsequently emigrates to South America. There in the hills, because of his blue eyes, light complexion, golden hair and beard, he is hailed by the Indians as a Sun God. Reluctant to accept the role cast upon him, he is nevertheless flattered and persuaded by their faith to do so. Convincing them that they should establish a democratic way of life, he organizes a revolution in the capital city of San Judas of the Mines to overthrow General Montenegro "a cold, crafty, hairless monster" and autocratic head of the Government.

Although victorious, the Sun God and his tribe have failed to eliminate Montenegro himself, who unwittingly foiled their assassination plan by having a tooth extracted at the moment when he was to have been speech-making on his balcony. Finally, the now hungry Indians, knowing Montenegro's forces are massing to recoup their losses, banish their deity when he renounces violence and vows to achieve his ends by peaceful means instead of defending the town.

As he trudges through the mountain passes into exile, the Indian girl whom the hero loves tries unsuccessfully to persuade him to return and fight. In the end, when captured by Montenegro's triumphant army, he attains his own moral victory by becoming a legendary figure.

W. B.

NOTHING BUT PRAIRIE AND SKY: Life on the Dakota Range in the Early Days. Recorded by Walker D. Wyman from the original notes of Bruce Siberts. Illustrated. 217 p p Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press.

In the summer of 1901, Bruce Siberts, a horse rancher on the Cheyenne River in South Dakota, rode across the still unfenced range to join a round-up headed by a wealthy French-Indian. He found the cook, night wrangler and two or three cowboys white, while twenty-five others were Indians and mixed breeds.

The hands sitting around the fire talked mostly about "towe, Sioux for sex." That was "what all cowhands a long way from women talked about. There was a general belief in that country that eating so much beef whetted the sex desire"—but nobody was inclined to cut beef out of his diet. "Towe was the most important topic of conversation in South Dakota."

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The book contains vivid descriptions of cow towns in the Eighteen Nineties, from Pierre to Cheyenne; the scene shifts from branding-corral to winter camp in the heart of the Dakota country, to horse-wrangling in the Bad Lands. "There were a lot of old camps, mostly Indian. Bones were all over. Long jaw bones with big teeth that looked like they were petrified. Buffalo horns were old and ready to go back to nothing. Coyotes and big gray lobo wolves were all over. Cattle and horses were plentiful in most places. Most of all, there was just lots of scenery, a kind of a jungle of land, and one could get lost easy if you did not spot trails and landmarks as you went along."

* * *

The contribution of "Nothing but Prairie and Sky" to the already extensive literature of range life lies in its realism. Hardly a sentence holds up the romantic view of cowboy life. "Lots of Texas boys came to Dakota looking for work," Siberts recalls. "A few were from the farming part of Texas and were pretty decent boys, but most of them had malaria or hookworms and looked like scrub stock." Some men who worked on ranches in the summer went to town for the winter, dressed in flashy clothes. They never really belonged to a cow camp, but they belong to Siberts' picture gallery.

Bruce Siberts was lucky in finding Walker D. Wyman to edit his reminiscences, for Mr. Wyman knows the language and background of the Dakota range, is skillful in selecting and economical in writing. "Nothing but Prairie and Sky" is a first-class successor to Mr. Wyman's "The Wild Horse of the West."

J. F. D



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JEMMY BUTTON. By Benjamin Subercaseaux. Translated from the Spanish by Mary and Fred del Villar. 382 pp. New York: The Macmillan Company.

THE theme of the noble savage exposed to the slings and arrows of civilization is not exactly a new one, but Benjamin Subercaseaux, the Chilean writer, has given it a new twist. His four protagonists—natives of Tierra del Fuego—are not corrupted by being transplanted to the London of the Eighteen Thirties for a very good reason: they are already corrupt.

Unlike the natural man of Jean Jacques Rousseau and others, Jemmy Button, the principal Fuegian of the four, is at heart crafty, sinful and quite capable of using his considerable charm to achieve his own shoddy and shifting purposes. And so, to a lesser degree, are the other three natives uprooted by Captain Robert Fitz-Roy of H. M. S. Beagle—Boat Memory, York Minster and the totally amoral young girl, Fuegia Basket.

Fitz-Roy is the most interesting character in the novel. A nephew of the ill-fated statesman Castlereagh, a man of strong passion and iron self-discipline, he was in actual fact the leader of two expeditions to chart the coasts of Tierra del Fuego and to find a substitute passage for the storm-ridden Straits of Magellan. In the course of his explorations he became fascinated with the natives and determined to expose them to pre-Victorian London.

* * *

Such facts are amply documented by existing journals of Fitz-Roy and of the young Charles Darwin, a member of the second expedition. Subercaseaux has chosen to re-cast the material in a fictional mold. He uses the journals as prime source-material, and then invents a brace of mythical diaries as the vehicles upon which the story moves.

The diaries—of the assistant ship's surgeon and a missionary—are well-handled. Fictional though they are, they have the stamp of truth on them. Paradoxically, the long passages which link the diaries are stilted and derivative. Yet the high purpose and historical accuracy of the writer are unmistakable. These are communicated intact through a forthright translation which does not attempt to change the Chilean's stylistic tacking into a straighter, smoother course before the wind. And, dominating the pages, is the fascination of Tierra del Fuego, the Land of Fire, and of ice-green bays.

B. W

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Current Attractions

SYMPHONY

By Vane C. Dalton

THE schedule of concerts which comprises the current season by the National Symphony Orchestra at the Palacio de Bellas Artes came to a tragic interruption through the death of the Viennese conductor Clemens Krauss, brought on by heart failure two hours and some minutes after he conducted the second program of the five that had been assigned to him. Krauss, who had been in poor health prior to his arrival in Mexico, apparently exhausted his final strength in rehearsing the orchestra, and succumbed to the emotional reaction produced by the ovation he received from his audience upon the conclusion of his final concert.

Observing him on the podium one perceived that he was hardly able to cope with the physical effort involved in his task, that his gestures were impeded by sheer lack of strength. And yet it was obvious that despite this handicap he fully communicated his purpose to the orchestra, that its excellent performance was the result of the complete concord he achieved with it during the preceding series of painstaking rehearsals. Hence, the two programs Krauss conducted at the Bellas Artes sufficed to convince me that he was a symphony leader of major stature.

From the very outset of his opening program one felt in the orchestra's performance the powerful impress of his personality. Schubert's 8th. symphony, which I have heard on so many other occasions, acquired a new beauty and freshness as it was rendered under his baton. But the evening's veritable triumph was

defined in the rendition of Richard Strauss' symphonic poem "Don Juan." In his interpretation of this work Krauss seemed to be determined to bring out its sonorous poetic beauty to superlative limits. All the minor passages that ordinarily are obscured in relevance, assumed under his direction a new significance. The clarity of instrumental diction he achieved refined the rich colorfulness of the composition, projecting its beauty to a mark of authentic sublimity.

Consequently, during the brief minutes of its duration, "Don Juan" evoked in the listener a sequence of sharply changing emotions, which rose to truly electrifying moments at its stupendous climax. "Don Juan," for all its brevity, was undoubtedly the signal achievement in the program. Herein, one felt, the conductor invested the utmost of his creative, and in this instance, physical, resources to achieve perfection.

It was in the execution of Brahms' second symphony that one began to note the conductor's diminishing vigor, his incapacity to cope with the serious problem posed by this work. This was the first time that this work had been performed by this ensemble, and therefore quite a few of the musicians were visibly handicapped in being compelled to closely follow the notes, striving at the same time to observe the conductor's indications. One sensed the tense effort entailed in the performance.

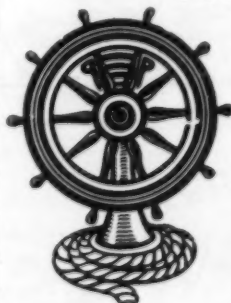
This, however, was only part of the problem Krauss had to confront. The other, and more difficult part of the problem was to overcome the dominant

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influence of Carlos Chavez, who had conducted this orchestra during the preceding weeks, an influence which has, in fact, prevailed over this ensemble throughout its entire existence. For it cannot be denied that the National Symphony Orchestra not only owes its existence to Carlos Chavez but actually, in a deep-rooted sense, defines his personality. Whether it is a good or bad influence—and I am inclined to believe that if it combines both elements the good in it by far outweighs the bad—is a matter of personal opinion. There can no divided opinion, however, regarding the fact that this influence is almost diametrically opposed to the musical concepts which animated the late Viennese conductor.

Contrary to the hard metronomic precision which characterizes the interpretations of Chavez, Krauss demanded from the orchestra softness and elasticity. While Chavez seeks brilliance in sharp contrasts, Krauss pursued utmost expressiveness through tonal subtlety. By never overshadowing any passage, by rendering a composition in most complete form, to the finest detail, by utilizing the full orchestral palette, he sought to bring out the full colorfulness of a work.

And since for years the orchestra has grown attuned to the Chavez concept, and has formulated a technique based on this concept, it was not an easy matter to depart from this technique, to change its habitual manner, confronting, moreover, a work as extremely difficult to read, to measure and phrase as the Brahms Second symphony. Furthermore, this orchestra, accustomed as it is to more eloquent gestures, seemed insufficiently animated, even to a degree disconcerted, by the spare motions Krauss, in his debilitated condition, employed in his guidance.

Following the splendid rendition of "Don Juan," the Brahms symphony seemed uninspired and pale. And yet, even if the orchestra could not fully respond to his wishes, Krauss was able to define the highly romantic nature of this work, to bring out the melodious beauty of its themes, and, above all, to lend incisiveness and force to the passages of subdued instrumentation and dense harmonies which so often figure in its score. Within the deficiency of its execution, we were given a faithful version of this sym-

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phony by Brahms, with all its thematic splendor, the exuberance of its rhythms and force of its dynamic contrasts.

The second and final concert conducted by Krauss served to demonstrate the extraordinary degree of identification the National Symphony Orchestra has achieved with its guest conductor during the brief period of two weeks. The execution of the entire program, clearly excelling that of the first, was marked by an admirable evenness, by a full rapport between the musicians and the leader.

Brahms' concerto for a piano and orchestra, Op. 83, with Angelica Morales as soloist, was the salient work in this program. Although it is evident that in performing this composition the soloist undertook a highly praiseworthy test, it is only fair to say that her ability did not quite measure up to the strenuous test. The work, I believe, is too difficult for her, and, for that matter, for almost any other woman pianist. It is indeed a work that can be played the way it should be by a counted few among the living masters. There were quite a number of felicitous passages in her performance, but there were also those where the piano was almost entirely submerged by the orchestra. At any rate, the valorous effort made by this pianist and the fine musicianship she revealed amply merited the generous applause she received. Though Krauss, for the reason mentioned above, was unable to achieve a balanced dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra, the accompaniment he elicited from it was perfectly timed, sober and profound.

In the execution of Haydn's symphony No. 88 and of Beethoven's "Leonore" overture Krauss forcefully evinced the essence of his technique, the special gift which enabled him to extract all the subtle shading from each score, to build up his planes of sonorousness step by step and lift it to a superb dramatic climax at the finale of the work.

With the death of Clemens Krauss, the National Institute of Fine Arts was forced to revise the schedule of the current season, having been able to engage Henry Swoboda, director of the Prague Symphony Orchestra, to present an interim program. This conductor will be followed by Sergiu Celibidache, who will most likely direct the remaining eight programs which, according to original plans, are to complete the season.



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Art Events

SALON de la Plastica Mexicana (Calle de Puebla No. 154), conducted by the National Institute of Fine Arts, has established an additional exhibit gallery, Sala de los Independientes, where it intends to show works by independent artists—i.e., those who are not identified with the contemporary Mexican trend. This annex gallery was opened to the public with a most unusual exhibit of pencil drawings by Roberto Block.

A Frenchman by birth and a long-time resident in Mexico, Block presents in this show a series of Mexican landscapes, beautifully composed and deeply expressive though achieved with an ordinary lead pencil. Restricting himself to this austere medium, Roberto Block creates works that are rich in plastic values. He is an artist of unique personality.

Jointly with this exhibit, the above salon is presenting in its main gallery a very interesting group of semi-abstract sculptures by Geles Cabrera.

AT THE conclusion of these exhibits, Salon de la Plastica Mexicana will present a collection of paintings in oil by the distinguished Belgian artist Constante Permeke.

GALERIA Arte Moderno (Calle de Roma No. 21) is offering an unusually fine collection of paintings in oil by the French artist Andree Bizet. Although Mlle. Bizet has been residing and working in Mexico during the past few months, the paintings she is presenting in this exhibit were all done in France, depicting street scenes of Paris and landscapes of Provence. Devoting herself to the interpretation of the visual world, this artist has evolved a style which stems from the early French Moderns.

A COLLECTION of ink drawings by Alfredo Zalce is currently on show at the Galeria de la Estampa (Calle de Palma No. 9-407).



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THE Galeria Romano (Jose María Marroquí No. 5) is presenting at this time its seventh annual group exhibition, titled Salon de Primavera. A total of forty-eight artists are listed in this exhibit's catalogue with one work each. Including works by such substantial artists as Raúl Anguiano, José Bardasano, Ramón Espino Barros and José Borgognoni, as well as by numerous young aspirants, this show presents in aggregate an ample variety of styles and manners, and ranges in quality from obvious trivia to an occasional note of authentic merit.

A GROUP exhibition of a somewhat similar nature is being offered this month by the Circulo de Bellas Artes (Calle de Niza No. 43). The highly varied and uneven collection of paintings gathered in this show includes excellent canvases by such seasoned professionals as Pedro Galarza, Agustin Tamayo and Jorge Vazquez Luna, as well as numerous tentative efforts by amateurs of rather dubious talent or promise.

TAXCO, with its quaint streets, its unspoiled Colonial architecture and matchless landscapes, has attracted innumerable visiting artists to its pictorial midst. Now it promises to attract numerous art students who will take advantage of the courses offered by the new Taxco School of the Arts. The school is to be directed by Fidel Figueroa, who was born in Taxco, studied in Paris, Madrid and the U.S., and whose dazzling depictions of his native town have given him world-wide fame. The faculty will include Jaime Oates, Rosa Oates, Antonio Castillo, Daniel Breenman and Fernando Cruzado. The courses cover instruction in drawing, painting, engraving, sculpture, silvercraft and Spanish.

JOINTLY with the International Exposition of Children's Drawings, the Jose Clemente Orozco Gallery (Calle de Peralvillo No. 55) is presenting a voluminous show of paintings and drawings by pupils in the local public schools.

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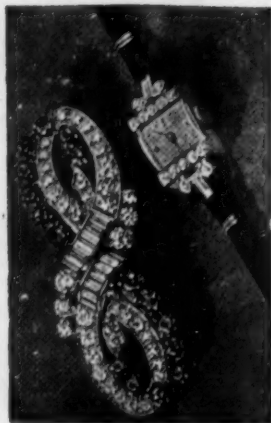
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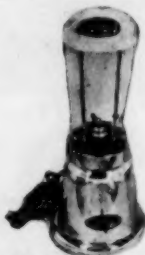
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Patterns of an Old City

Continued from page 21

hours, and Saldivar decided that nothing would be gained by waiting longer. When he stepped out from under the awning and started walking down the street he surmised, without actually seeing her, sensing her presence as one might sense the presence of a stray trailing dog, that the girl was pacing behind him. Without turning to look he quickened his step, now intent on getting away, yet he knew that the girl kept pace with him, that she seemed actually determined to follow.

Deterred by the traffic he paused at the corner, and there she stood at his side. Now, for the first time, he caught sight of her face, a quite ordinary face with a short nose, wide mouth and high cheekbones, which somehow did not seem to him ordinary when for a moment, glowing through the watery murk with a pallid brightness, it became fixed on him with trembling lips and a strange look in its widerset eyes.

"Listen," he said. "You should not be out at a time like this. You are getting drenched and it is not good for you. You should be staying indoors."

She looked up at him again, her lips trembling without uttering a sound, and the startling thought came to him that the moisture of rain which covered her face was streaked with the moisture of tears. "Look," he said. "Is there something wrong? Where are you going?"

She said something inaudible, in a voice as faint as a sigh, and he repeated his question, "Where are you going? Why are you out in this rain?... Look, you don't seem to be all right. Is there something wrong?"

Her words were yet so faint that he hardly heard her. "No... Nothing... I was out looking... Looking for work... for a place... Must find a... a place... And it started raining I was looking... And now it got late... and I am... I am..."

He stared at her baffled, wishing to turn and walk away, and yet something held him, and though sensing that what he said was preposterous, went on. "Well now, you can't be walking like this. Tramping the street in a rain. If you have no place to go, I live not far away. You may... Well, you may come along, come in and get dry."

She moved at his side in silence, and waited for him in the bakery doorway while he walked in to buy his usual bag of rolls, and followed him through the dark and narrow tenement court to the door of his flat. He took the blanket off his bed and draped it over her shoulders and made her sit in the kitchen near the brazero while he heated the coffee.

It was a weird situation, a situation which verged

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on a predicament, and though he wished to clear it up, though he was actually curious to know more about her, he was reluctant to ask, fearing that he might thus become involved in her problem. It was not till he sat with her at the table and watched her eat, at first timidly, hesitantly, then hungrily, devouring the food as if she were famished, that he ventured to say, "The food is good for you. You have probably not eaten much today."

"No," she said. "Not today. I have been out walking all day. Looking, and I have not... It is because Demetrio, my mother's husband, my stepfather... because he turned me out. He did not want me there. He never wanted me, and now he turned me out. He always said the street was my place—that I belonged on the street... He's been drinking as always, and my mother is sick, and she could do nothing about it. He had done it before, but I was too small then, and I always went back. But now my mother is sick and she could do nothing about it... Now I could not go back."

Saldivar had no desire to know more, and he was frightened by what he had learned: he was frightened by this blunt impact with a reality which he habitually sought to avoid. There was a man called Demetrio and an ailing woman, and there was this girl sitting before him, and the world was full of things like that, but there was nothing one could do about it.

* * *

And yet, facing this girl, a strange emotion possessed him. He was baffled by this emotion, and he was dismayed by the situation he faced, for he was indeed entirely unprepared for it. His life had followed a restricted rut; his daily experience had been so utterly circumscribed by habit and reiterated performance, his intrinsic existence was so totally confined

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to his own small personal concerns—the trite and undisturbing routine of carrying out a stipulated daily task exacted by the need of self-preservation—that he had lost the capacity for concern in others, or even for the slightest degree of direct curiosity in surrounding life.

Each day he got up at seven, spunged himself at the kitchen sink, shaved, dressed, prepared and ate his breakfast, made up his bed, tidied up his quarters with a broom and rag, donned his coat, locked the front door, and walked the length of several blocks, arriving punctually at nine to begin his day's shift in the department of third-class mail of the central post office.

Nine pesos and sixty-four centavos as a daily wage would hardly suffice for a man with a family; but it was more than sufficient for Saldivar's modest needs. To be sure, a new suit was a signal event which occurred only once in two years, and he knew how a shirt could be worn till it literally fell apart by taking it to a shop where its frayed cuffs and collars were turned, and he was adept at mending his socks. He ate his mid-day meal in one of the cheap restaurants in the vicinity of the post office, and his supper, consisting of coffee and rolls, in his flat. Save for an occasional picture-show in one of the cheaper neighborhood theatres, he spent the evenings sitting in his flat perusing the columns of the afternoon paper, reading it entirely from first page to the last, including even the advertising. Thus, beyond the inevitable and superficial associations at his work, the newspaper was his sole contact with reality. In his total withdrawal it yet enabled him to vicariously participate in the life around him.

Life had become with him an inalterable sequence; it had assumed a definitive pattern. It was a tranquil immutable process instinctively shielded from any disruption or change. Years back, of course, there had been a period of youthful unrest. There had been no fixed or driving ambition, only the normal cravings for fulfillment—a woman's love, children, a home, possessions—vague cravings which were gradually quelled and effaced by repeated minor frustrations, obliterated in a final acquiescence.

At forty and some odd, a slight man with a stoop and a bald patch, Saldivar had safely outlived his cravings. He had achieved his escape and found his refuge from a reality which he could never comprehend or surmount. He had found his peace and safety treading along a fixed quotidian rut without the slightest urge for deviation.

And yet, within this peace and safety, within this tranquil surrender, Saldivar, without ever comprehending it, only sensing it vaguely as some obscure incurable ailment, was slowly dying of the disease of loneliness.

And without comprehending his deed, driven by a wild irrational impulse, stirred by a reawakened fragment of passion, by a final desperate urge to sur-

vive this ravaging disease, fumblingly, clumsily, futilely struggling against his incongruous lust, he seduced her during that night.

She was sound asleep when he arose in the morning and watching her peaceful childlike face he was loath to disturb her. He left her breakfast on the kitchen table and several peso bills and scribbled a note, asking her to please pull the door shut so that it would be firmly latched when she left. As he worked during that day he sought to brush her away from his thoughts, to make himself believe that his experience, as incredibly odd as it had been, was of no lasting consequence, that, assuredly, she would be gone by the time he returned home, and that he would most likely never see her again.

But she was there, waiting for him, when he returned. "I thought I would stay a while," she said and broke off with a painted timorous smile. "I thought I would brush up the place a little... You see, I've scrubbed the floors. Mind, they are still a little wet, and I've scoured the pots and cleaned the ashes out of the brazero... I thought I would do it while I was here, while I was waiting."

"But look," he said, seized by an alarm that was like a clutching hand. "Look. I didn't... I didn't mean..." and stopping bewildered amid-sentence stared helplessly around him. And then he saw the pained smile and the mute doglike plea in her eyes, and muttered irresolutely, "Well, yes... I suppose it is too late now... too late to be going out by yourself... I suppose you 'll just... just have to stay."

That night, as he lay wakeful at her side, the tormenting thought came to him that perhaps this would not be the final night, that perhaps he was caught, stuck with her, that he had made a monstrous error, that something dreadful and irreparable had happened to him. And this sleepless torment rendered him spent and shorn of will or decision when he faced her in the morning. He did not have the courage to tell her that she must go.

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Through the day, as he worked, his mind formulated plans, shaped the precise words he would say to her if she were yet there when he returned, kind though stern words that would explain everything, that would make things simple and clear and assure his riddance, and as he walked home, again through a drizzle, he repeated those words, mentally rehearsed the scene he would enact.

But he never uttered those words, not on that evening nor on any other through the ensuing days, weeks and months, during all the time when he knew that he was trapped, that he was held relentlessly by fate, that there was no escape, no liberation, save through some miracle—a stroke of lightning, a flood, or a fire—through the intervention of some supernatural force. He did not utter these words because in his perpetual torment he was never certain that they defined his final wish; he was only certain that something had to happen, something had to intervene, had to prevent that this strange girl he found on the street in a rain would be allowed to give birth to his child.

* * *

In a bungling way he sought to be helpful, to do whatever he could; but at the crucial moment when his help was actually needed, when everything suddenly seemed to be going wrong, flustered, dumbfounded, he seemed only to hinder, to be getting into the woman's way, till angrily, in shrill exasperation she ordered him to get out, to go to the other room and wait.

He sat in his kitchen chair drenched in cold sweat, inert as if congealed in a trance, his unseeing eyes fixed on the open door, his mind devoid of a sense of time or reality, devoid of any knowledge but that of an impending doom or a miraculous liberation.

And then he grew dimly aware that the commotion had ended abruptly, that there was a pause of quiet, and there was the sound of gentle slapping over flesh, and a tiny rasping cackle that grew into a feeble outcry, a tiny outcry that somehow became mighty, became great, so great that it filled all the space around him, and suddenly a vast ineffable feeling came to him that everything was right.

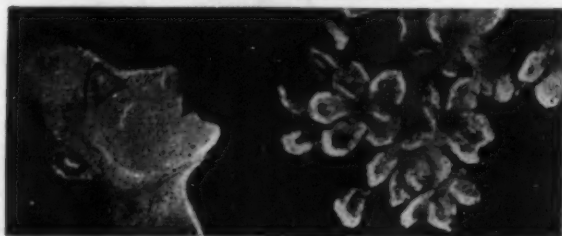
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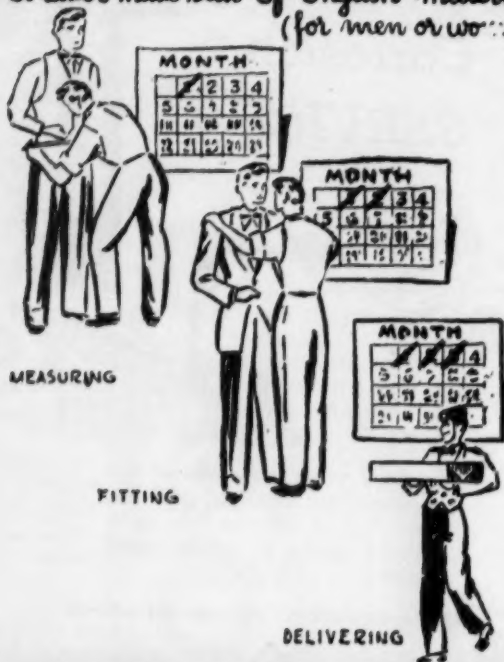
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The Sleeping Princess

Continued from page 24

ed that no one, on penalty of death, was to give them shelter or food. Owing to the Prince's recent victory over the King's enemies, the head of the Aztec nation now ruled over all the lands of the Tarascan nations far westward on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro.

* * *

The outcast couple fled, and for weeks and months wandered shelterless and usually hungry over the plains of central Mexico. At last they reached a small valley surrounded by high hills which lay some distance southeast from the city of Tenochtitlán. Here the Prince constructed a rude shelter and made their home, the Prince hunting in the forests for game and cultivating small fields which he cleared from the forest land. Years passed, but the Aztec King never revoked his edict of banishment.

At length came a day when the Princess was stricken with a strange malady and for weeks lay quietly upon her couch. The Prince ministered as best he could, but at length realized that she could not live much longer, for she had already lapsed into a coma from which he feared she would never awaken.

While kneeling by her couch borne down with his grief, he suddenly heard a voice so deep and rumbling that he recognized the great god of all the mountains speaking to him: "My son, tonight is the last night of this life which you will spend with your loved one. But fear not, for the gods have observed the unjust punishment which the lord of Anáhuac meted out to you. Tonight, say farewell to your Princess, but tell her the gods have decreed that she will not die but will fall into a deep slumber from which, many years hence, she will be awakened by your kiss, and when that day arrives you will drive from the valley of the Aztecs a strange race which are even now on their way hither."

The voice ceased and the awed Prince turned back to the bedside. His Princess soon awakened refreshed, and they talked far into the night: of their love, of their past adventures, of how happy the years had been, and of the promise of the gods. Finally she kissed him for the last time and relaxed in his arms just as the lights of morning began to steal into the room.

Again the Prince heard the voice of the god: "My son, take your loved one in your arms and carry her up the western slope of the valley, there to behold

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the gods of all the heavens engaged in their mighty task."

The Prince obeyed and immediately after reaching the heights heard a distant rumbling. Turning toward the east, he beheld an awesome and momentous sight, accompanied by strange and terrifying sounds. The earth trembled and shook in the throes of a mighty earthquake. From the top of the low line of hills on the other side of the valley two volcanoes began to form, belching great sheets of blazing fire, roaring and hurling in all directions. Clouds of smoke issued from the craters, soon covering the heavens, and great streams of lava, destroying everything in their paths, rolled slowly down the slopes. In but a brief time two great mountains had been formed. Then the gods gathered upon the top of the northernmost peak and with their great blankets of snow put out the fires.

And again the voice of the god was heard: "Now, my Prince, take your loved one and carry her to the top of the northern mountain and lay her gently upon a couch which you will find already prepared for her. Then take up your position on the top of the southern peak, that you may guard her well during the long centuries ahead. But slumber lightly against that hour when we will call upon you to awaken your Princess and to drive the coming invaders from the Valley of Anáhuac."

Lifting the body of his sleeping Princess, the Prince carried her up the slopes of the now snow-covered mountain, found the prepared couch, and laid her gently upon it. Then, kissing her for the last time, he turned, picked up his lance and other accoutrements of war, and walked with long strides to the very top of the adjacent peak, there assuming his guarding position, the fire from his mountain making a great torch to illuminate the sleep of his beloved Princess.

And the snows came and tenderly enfolded the body of the sleeping lady and the throne of her guardian warrior-husband; and since that day the gods have kept the torch-fires burning, warm and eternal, like the love of Popocatepetl, the prince of the Chichimecas, and Ixtaccihuatl, his sleeping princess.



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The General and the flat tires
Continued from page 16

"But my friends, the dirt was Mexican dirt; and the cause was the Mexican roads. In your country, on your fine highways, such a thing would not befall a Mexican tourist. It was no more than my responsibility, as a good citizen to offer the aid. Some day my land will have roads like yours; but that day can only come if people like yourselves continue to travel what roads we now have. My people must first see the need of good roads, before they can be built; and you, my friends, are the pioneers so necessary to make all this possible."

Then he launched into the proposed plans for the west coast highway, which in a few years would make us more fully the good neighbors that we should be. We were a contented and happy lot that night.

The next morning we were first in line, when the Mexican customs opened. Our car was loaded with all sorts of things; insect collections, plant materials, tree seeds, painting, and camping equipment. Everything would have to be gone over and checked. We figured it would take till noon to reach the American flag we could see, less than a block away, across the steel fence. We had all the necessary permits and papers handy, when the inspector stepped up. He started looking them over, while another started to open the door. The cargador we had engaged to handle the baggage took out the first suitcase. Suddenly, the chief inspector bustled up.

"Un momento, Señores! Are you the artist? And you Señor, the collector of the bugs? Ah! it is good that I arrived. It will not be necessary to remove anything from the car. I am assured that all is in order. It will take but a little moment to sign the papers." He drew a fountain pen from his shirt pocket, with a flourish. "Sign here, on the tourist cards that you turn in," he indicated. "Now I sign your permits thus," he continued, "and you are on your way. Pasen ustedes y vayan con Dios."

We shall never forget General Elguerra.

The way of Democracy
Continued from page 18

local governments. If that opportunity is grasped, the federal system could be salvaged with democratizing results. With the ability to perform more works services, the lower levels of government, closer to the people, could win their allegiance through greater efficiency and economy than is possible by a swollen federal bureaucracy.

If the economic development also provided for more nearly adequate remuneration for civil servants at all levels of government, administration could be relie-

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ved of much of the corruption and venality. Though President Aleman pledged integrity in government with apparent sincerity, no such pledge could be really enforced so long as paid civil servants dependent on political caprice, and bureaucratic organization and red tape so complicated as often to be unworkable unless corners are cut. The very magnitude of government responsibilities growing out of economic development may compel a thorough administrative reorganization for more effective democracy.

Certainly Mexico cannot outgrow quickly its heritage of anarchy and authoritarianism. Apparently, however, it has now achieved the first long stride in that direction: stable government in the form of a democratic republic. Considering the imperfections still prevalent in the democratic form of the United States government, after a century and a half of evolution, with the interruption of one civil war that failed to overthrow constituted authority, Mexico in comparison may be considered to have achieved commendable political progress in its mere three decades of revolutionary self-government. It has already become doubtful, at least, that any Mexican government could, by any means, long survive in opposition to the general and special interests of the majority of the Mexican people, especially their economic interests, and that doubt is in itself a democratizing force.

The last Boat left Yesterday

Continued from page 14

a matapalo, the strangling jungle vine, Dolores had wrapped herself about my heart.

"Finally came the night that was for me the blackest night this side of death. Don Anastacio had invited me to dine. I was also to pay him for the last shipment of his coffee that had gone aboard the day before, and had the check in my pocket. We were in the garden, sipping some very fine Jerez. In some way our conversation was forced. It dragged on inanely, because my host seemed preoccupied with something, while I felt very jittery, for I had decided,



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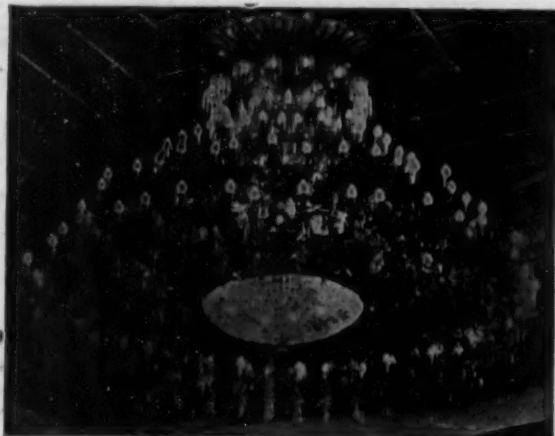
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after giving him his check, to ask for permission to formally call on Dolores.

"His hand nervously pulling at his trim mustache, Don Anastacio started a dozen times and stopped before finishing a sentence, until finally his mind seemed to clear and he talked on in his usual arresting manner. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'to be so obtuse at this moment. The Latin mind, as you have probably observed, is complex, in a sort of wilted, flabby manner. But somehow its flabbiness is a soft, pliable scabbard that often conceals a tempered Toledo blade. It is a mind,' he mused on, 'that wanders through many paths, enjoying them all. Its terminal is fixed. It knows exactly where it is going. But it does not wish to get there too fast.

"Life," he went on at a new tangent, 'is merely a matter of values. One thing is worth just so much of another thing—that is, more or less, at different times and under different circumstance.' He stopped and plucked a tiny sprig of something that was growing near his feet, and held it up to let me see it. 'Take this, for instance. Once, many years ago, my great-grandfather cleared what was then an untamed jungle and planted it to this—indigo. For years the family prospered, then science found a substitute that was better and many times cheaper, and the plant became a weed, overnight. So goes fate. After all, life is just a matter of swapping—this for that, your this for my that. So the purpose is to get the best of the bargain. But what do you really get in exchange for all your scheming? The right to live, to enjoy life's basic hunger for food and love... Which reminds me—it is now time to go in for dinner.'

"My heart had suddenly become a lump of lead. I had missed my chance. I did not have the courage to speak the truth, to reveal my intentions. And I knew that in Don Anastacio's curious allusions I had received an ultimatum. During the interminable dinner, when I looked at Dolores, I sensed that she also knew that I had lost.

"When the sweets and brandy were served, Don Anastacio waved his glass for silence. 'It seems appropriate,' he said, 'that we should thank our esteemed guest, Don Felipe, who for so many years has been

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so helpful in keeping, as perhaps he would put it, our peons in frijoles and ourselves in fair prosperity. With this aid our life has been enriched in more than one way. My daughter Dolores has come of age, wise, gracious, obedient and beautiful. So I would like to announce that I am presenting to her the proceeds of the last of our crop, which Don Felipe has taken off my hands, to pay for her journey, to take care of the wedding and her honeymoon with her distant cousin, Antonio Barrangan Garcidiego, who awaits her in Spain."

"The blow was sudden, horrible. I, who have been regarding myself as indispensable, had been thrown like a banana peel into a garbage pail. I do not clearly remember what happened after that. Though I remember that I flung my glass on the table, shattering others and splashing wine over the guests. Then I pulled the check from my pocket, tore it into bits, threw it into the air and stormed from the room. The only thing that I do remember clearly is that Juan José, the majordomo, in handing me my hat as I reached the door, said stiffly, 'Lo siento, Señor.' He did not address me 'jefecito,' as he had always done before, and I knew that I was banished for ever.

"I got drunk and stayed drunk for many days. I neglected my business entirely, and presently I was out of a job. In fact, I lost everything, perhaps even my soul. Nothing seemed to really matter any more. And yet the last place in the world I wanted to go was home. So I stayed.

"There is a tidal creek up the coast, about a mile from the port. I is called Riachuela de los Muertos—the Little River of the Dead. It runs through an absolutely impenetrable jungle of mangrove, thorny weeds and tangled vines. It is a crazy kind of a stream. On the incoming tide the water rushes wildly upstream; when the tide changes it rushes even faster down toward the sea. During extreme tides it reaches the boundaries of Don Anastacio's holdings flooding a stretch of flat, marshy grasslands. Years back, when the tides were higher and cargoes could be brought up-stream, the muleteers built a warehouse of thatch, reed and mud near those marshlands. But it seems that afterwards the tides usually stopped short, so the warehouse was finally abandoned.

"Shortly after that last supper at Don Anastacio's, as I was brooding on the hotel porch over a bottle of aguardiente, a mozo walked up, hat in hand, fumblingly handed me a piece of crumpled paper, and quickly disappeared. With a blurred vision and thumping heart, I read: 'The tide will be high tonight. Bodega. Lola.'

"My mind cleared in an instant. I rushed to my room, shaved, changed clothes, and trembling like one in the throes of a violent chill, hurried up the beach to the Riachuela de los Muertos. I had a little flat-bottomed bateau there that I had often used to run the tide through the jungle tunnel that covered the little river. Soon the tide was with me and the bateau was rushing forward, carrying me toward an unfathomable goal of either triumph, ecstasy or doom. I finally reached the banks of the marshlands and on trembling knees made my way to the bodega. Dolores stepped from the shadows. Her maid was there, and a stableboy who held the horses. She dismissed them, and they retired into the jungle.

"We entered the dark bodega, neither of us speaking a word. And when she fell into my arms there was only the wordless delirium, the abandon to a bliss which cannot be told in words. A moment, a lifetime, a whole eternity passed, and then I remember that she removed her burning lips from mine and whispered: 'The tide is turning. Go quickly. God keep you. I will always love you.' I heard her softly call her servants, and before I knew it I was being tossed and swirled back to the sea.

"Months later, when Dolores returned with her husband, there was a grand fiesta at the big house of the finca. It was not only a fiesta of homecoming but also to the new heir that was being born. Fireworks ablaze in the sky, marimbas wailing—two nights of it.

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"Time passed and I stayed on, drinking, drifting in a kind of empty circle. One afternoon, moping over a bottle, I was suddenly brought out from my stupor by a voice, a soft whisper, that seemed to come from nowhere. 'Go. Hurry,' I heard. 'She is waiting at the high tide.' I rose, looked around. There was no one near, though it seemed as if I heard the patter of feet running through the dead foliage of bread trees.

"My numbness fled, a new strength was in my legs. I rushed to the Richuela, found my little boat. The tide turned, and exultantly, madly, I was borne on its swift current. But it stopped. It stopped a mile short—a million miles short. Slowly, inexorably, the river steadied itself, went dead, then began to retreat, rapidly gaining speed, carrying me back to the sea. It was not the night of the high tide.

"That was years ago. A hundred times since then have I gone inland with the tide and it has always stopped short of my goal, and a hundred times have I been cast back to the sea.

"So I drank and drifted, drifted and drank. The friends of my prosperous days avoided me, eventually they refused even to recognize me. I became what I am. Something of an outcast. But I am not entirely friendless now. I have petty ways of making my living, ways that no doubt you would not approve of.

"As to Dolores—the pattern never changes here. She has grown complacent, satisfied, and sanctified. Her husband has had many passing affairs. She has taken the church for her second spouse. Her husband sniffs his brandy, drinks sparingly, and plays chess. She sees that his illegitimate children are taken care of. It is a model household.

"You wonder, I am sure, why I have remained here. You think it is weakness—man's capitulation to defeat. And I suppose it is. I did not leave because I could not, because I cannot . . . Because some day, some moon-drenched night when the jaguar calls to his mate and the hour bird chants his call, the matapalo vine will unwind itself from its stricken host. . . And the great tide will rush inland, tearing through the green tunnel of the Richuela de los Muertos. I will be riding it. I will reach the bodega, and Dolores will be there to meet me, leading her son by his hand—a grey-eyed boy—our son."

He broke off into silence, and then I perceived that we had been sitting in the dark, for the light had gone out. I heard him push his chair back and say, "Thank you for listening," and heard the sound of creaking boards as he passed the rickety veranda into the night.

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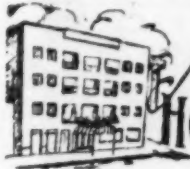
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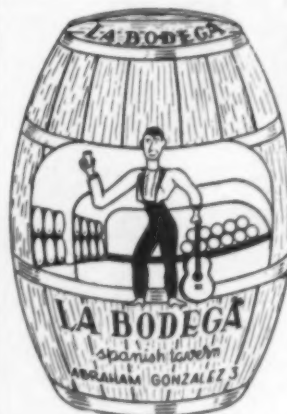
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There was the flash of a match. The bar-boy was lighting the stinking lamp again. "Pobre don Felipe," he said, significantly touching his forehead. "Completamente loco."

* * *

My beetle pulled out next day. As they were taking aboard the last of a cargo of coffee, a boy came running up to the overseer on the gangplank, rapidly explained something to him and handed him a sprig of some sort of weed. The overseer came on deck and passed the sprig to me. "The boy says it is for you," he said.

"What in the world is it?" I asked.

"That," replied the overseer, is a sprig of añil—indigo. Years back this was the principal cargo from here. I wonder why he wanted you to have it? I did not answer, though I knew.

A Gentleman

Continued from page 10

"Si, Señor—a fine. Last night several of the village policemen took me to jail, and I spent the whole night there. They accused me of immorality. In order to get out of jail I had to pay fifteen pesos."

Knowing something about the private lives of the village policemen and particularly the judge who passed judgment on Antonio, I was reasonably cynical. "And what," I said, "does the judge consider immoral?"

"Pues, Señor, I will tell you," said Antonio peering shyly at his sombrero. "There is a girl called Concha who has been very much in love with me for a long time. I have never been in love with her, nor have I as much as touched her, though I must confess that she is not bad to look at and after all I am a man and I have learned that flesh is weak, Señor. Last night I was passing her house, and she stopped me and asked me if I would care to take a stroll up to the shrine of Guadalupe. I really had nothing else to do, and the night was so beautiful with moonlight that I consented. I assure you again, Señor, that my intentions were the purest, but I have heard that moonlight oftentimes brings out a sort of a madness, and before I realized what I was doing I was being held and pushed by two policemen, and poor Concha, as you can well imagine, was in a shameful state. It was terrible, Señor, terrible. But I shall do the honorable thing. I shall marry Concha this very day, although I do not love her and I know it will bring me bad luck."

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"Must you marry this girl?" I asked, disturbed at the way Antonio had accepted the words, "bad luck."

"Si, Señor. Her father is a cowardly man and a drunkard besides. When he finds out what has happened he will beat Concha and throw her out from the house. Such a scandal would ruin her life. It is not fair to her, Señor."

We shook hands, and Antonio left the house. I learned from my cook at supper that he had married Concha the same afternoon. That night I was troubled with vague forebodings. The more I thought of Antonio's premonition the more real and portentous it became.

In less than a week's time I received a note from Antonio's brother informing me that Antonio was seriously ill. I went to his house immediately. I was shocked upon seeing him. He looked more dead than alive. He lay in a coma on his bed, his eyes staring glassily at the ceiling. His breathing was labored and rasping. There were several peones, sombreros in hand, standing passively near his bedside, looking like characters in some pantomime. Their wives sat in an adjoining room and spoke to one another in whispers. Medicine odors, mingled with human odors, added to the horror of the scene.

I fled from the house to fetch a doctor. I found him after several hours' search and brought him back to the house. I waited outside while the doctor went in. I did not relish the idea of being witness to tragedy in that dismal little room.

Shortly the doctor emerged from the house. He was in a vile humor.

"Antonio, or whatever his name is, has spinal meningitis. There's no doubt about it. I had a case of it in San Gabriel not long ago. However, it is too late to do anything. Just how he's lived this long I don't know. But what worries me now are the people who've been in the same room with him. The stuff can be contagious, and as you know they've no me-

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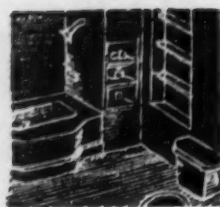
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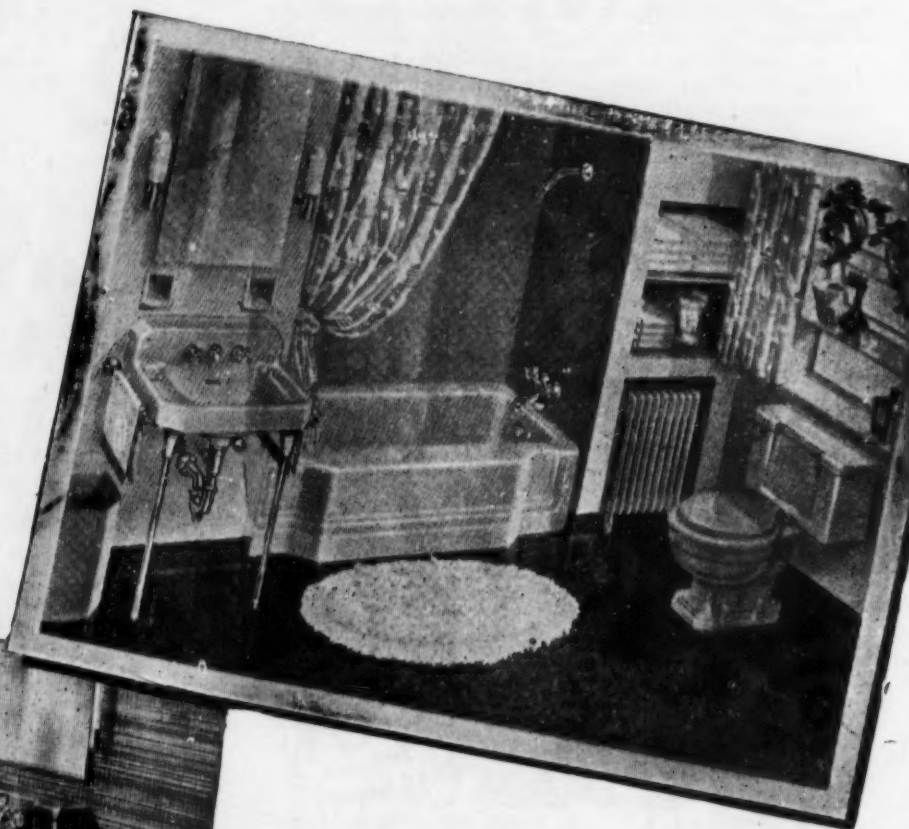




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dical facilities in this damned village to fight a disease like spinal meningitis."

At the moment I was observed by Antonio. "Isn't there something you can do to save him, doctor? Perhaps I could drive him to Mexico City?"

"Señor, there is nothing that you or I can do. His case is hopeless. He will not last through the night."

"Is he suffering?"

"Not now, but he must have suffered all the devils of hell the last few days. According to his brother he's been subjected to a couple of quack doctors who've been treating him for acute indigestion or something like that. By the way, was this man a friend of yours?"

"Antonio—yes, he was a very good friend of mine—and to my mind a very great man, doctor."

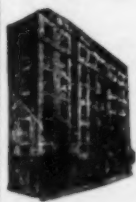
"That's the trouble," said the doctor as he took leave of me. "Microbes never know how to discriminate."

The Impact of Mexico City

Continued from page 12

I come out into Avenida Juárez ablaze with jukebox, movie theatre, haberdashery and soft-drink parlour. Our street, Avenida Hidalgo, was handsome if run down—a length of slummy palacios with oddments of Aztec masonry encrusted in their sixteenth-century facades, and no shops but a line of flower stalls selling funeral "pièces montées," huge wreaths and crosses worked with beads, filigree and mother-of-pearl skulls. The wrong side of the Alameda, we are later told. The right side looks like the Strand.

I walk on and am stunned by the sight of as amazing a structure as I could ever hope to see. It is the Palacio de Bellas Artes and was obviously built by Diez and in the early Nineteen Hundreds. I had best leave the description of this masterpiece of eclecticism to "Terry."



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This sounds an optimistic note. Alas, the Teatro Nacional is no iceberg, there are still some three hundred feet to sink.

When I reach the centre it is quite suddenly night. On Avenida Francisco Madero—a murdered President—the shops are bright with neons. Wells Fargo, where I had hoped to collect some letters, keep American hours and are closed. Everything else is open and bustling. After the three-hour lunch, the siesta and the rains, a new lease of business begins at about eight. The food shops are as good as they look. Great sacks of coffee in the bean, York hams and Parma hams, gorgonzolas, olive oil.

"May I buy all the ham I want?" I feel compelled to ask.

"How many hams, Señora?"

I have no intention of leaving this entrancing shop. It is as clean as it is lavish, and they are so polite... One might be at Fortnum's before the war. Only this is more expansive; that warm smell of roasting coffee and fresh bread. And the wines! Rows and rows of claret, pretty names and sonorous names

of "Deuxième Crus" all but forgotten, Chateau Gruaud-Larose-Sarget, Chateau Pichon-Longueville, Chateau Ducru-beaucaillou, alas all are expensive. A tray of small hot pasties is brought in, "mile feuilles" bubbling with butter.

"¿Qué hay en el interior?"

"Anchovy, cheese, chicken."

I have some done up to take back to E. There is French brandy, Scotch whisky, Campari Bitters, none of them really ruinous, but none of them cheap. Decidedly, the local produce. I get a quart of Bacardi Rum, the best, darkest kind. Five pesos. A peso is almost exactly a shilling. And a bottle of Mexican brandy. The name of this unknown quality is appropriate, "Cinco Equis," Five X's. It costs nine pesos and has three stars. We shall see.

As I leave the shop, a small child relieves me of my parcels. She does it with charm and dignity, hinting, not that she wishes to earn a tip, but that it is not suitable for me to go about the streets of Mexico with two bottles done up in brown paper hugged to my side and half a dozen meat pasties dangling from my figures by a string. In New York, I used to creep crosstown with a sack upon my shoulders returning from the Second Avenue Market. Carrots and potatoes would rumble on the pavement, the fish would slip or the eggs come rolling down. I would balance the sack and the string bag and the gallon jug on the stoop of a brownstone house and readjust my purchases. Nobody ever showed the slightest interest. I do not like being fetched and carried for by persons older or smaller than myself, but realize that here I must submit to so comfortable a custom. There are more shops like the first, and thanks to my companion I am now free to enjoy them all. I buy a bottle of Tequila (two pesos a quart and every pint guaranteed to give D. Ts.), succumb to Campari, but resist Spanish Pernod. After these additions I have a

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suite. But it is always the first child who receives the parcels from my hands and distributes them among the other tots. We have some stilted conversation. A young man is sitting on the pavement outside a branch of His Master's Voice with six avocado pears for sale. He shifts them before him in a pattern and as they are moved about in the dusk the avocados look like trained mice. I buy his stock. He has nothing to wrap it up in, so my head-child commandeers three passing babies with two empty hands each. The notion of having acquired half a dozen avocado pears for threepence makes me feel light-headed. I do not buy the two puppies from the man who came popping out of a church, but I buy a pineapple, a heap of papayas, a straw hat, some plums, some sweets for the porters (I feel squeamish about giving plain money to children), some hot chestnuts and some flowers: two armloads of tuberoses, and they too cost next to nothing. As we trail back through the business streets, Bolivar and Cinco de Mayo, and the pitch black Alameda, I feel like the Pied Piper. In the lobby, the children accept their fruit drops and ponies with self-possession. They thank me and express wishes for my well-being in this world and the next, "que Dios la proteja, que le vaya bien," hand thier parcels to a rather older hotel child and depart like well-bred guests at an Edwardian dinner-party without haste or lingering.

I had the impression that the desk clerk was obscurely distressed by my purchases. Sure enough, ten minutes later we are visited by the housekeeper. She looks Spanish, one of those neat, middle-aged, efficient Latin women who are so much better at their linen cupboards than one can ever hope to be at anything. She does not come to the point. Does Mexico please us?

Oh, indeed.

"Yes, it is pretty." We were not displeased by the rains?

We reassure her.

The hotel is also to our taste?

We try to say how pleased we are.

Yet those flowers. We did not like their flowers?

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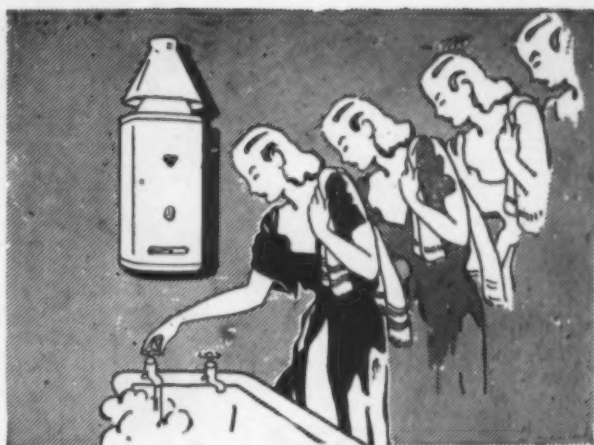
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At last I understand. The vases were already filled with lilac and narcissus. Mexican hotels, that is Mexican-run hotels in Mexico, put flowers in their guests' rooms with the towels and the bottle of drinking water. Fresh flowers every day, all year round. I try to explain that we had not been aware of this charming practice. We are not believed. The house-keeper leaves in a confusion of mutual apologies. Then the boy comes in from behind the door and bears away the lilac and narcissi. Next day, a great sheaf of tuberose appears in my bedroom, and all during our stay there are fresh tuberose every morning. I love them, and I am delighted.

* * *

There are three climatic zones in Mexico, one hot, one cold, one temperate. The "Tierras Calientes, Fria" and "Templada". The Hot Zone is very hot, the Cold not as cold as it sounds; the Temperate is celestial perfection.

It is also the most inhabited portion of the Republic—the best part of the "Mesa Central" lies in "Tierra Templada". Yet this plateau is not a temperate place at all: the mildness is luxuriant and dynamic, the temperance the product of the clash between two intemperances. It is a tropical region anomalously cool, combining the geographical extremes of Switzerland and Central Africa, as high as Mont-Blanc and as equatorial as the Sahara. At sea-level the Mexican latitudes would be desert and jungle; in the north the Mexican heights would be Alpine wastes. Joined, these excesses of parallel and altitude created a perennial Simla better than Simla. As a matter of recorded fact, the annual mean temperatures of the "Tierra Templada" vary between 66° and 73° Fahrenheit. The average rainfall is some 80 inches a year and concentrated within four months, June to October. In terms of human experience this means: it is always warm: it is never hot; it is never cold. It only rains in season and when it does it pours at fixed and regular hours, and afterwards the air again is dry and light, leaves and fields shine, there is no damp, no mud, no dripping, only a great new freshness. Grey days are unknown. Except for a few minutes of dramatic preparation for the actual burst, the sky is always clear. There is little difference in the weather between July and February; it may get rather warm in the late Spring and there are chilly evenings when the wind is blowing from the Coast, yet a person with a change of clothes suitable for an exceptionally fine English June, a blanket and a hut made of bamboo canes and waterproof leaves, would be comfortable day and night from one

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end of the year to the other. The possession of a mud cottage, and some pine cones for a fire around Christmas, would assure a sybaritic existence. This opens, and closes, economic vistas. A promoter from Germany, one is told by Gruening in his wonderfully detailed "Mexico and its Heritage," arrived some time in the nineteenth century full of business projects, and departed so disgusted that he wrote a long and angry volume on the natives' cursed lack of wants, their "verdamnte Beduerfniglosigkeit." He should see them now, poor man, sipping their Coca-Colas.

The second climatic zone is at sea-level and frankly tropical. Hundreds of miles of jungle, beach and silted port on the Pacific. The Gulf, with Vera Cruz, the oil trade, coffee fincas and a certain commercial bustle. The flat country of the deep South: Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán—swamps forests, sugar cane and pre-Columbian ruins. The third, the Cold Zone, is not a region but a number of separate points of especial altitude on the temperate plateau. It is a matter of exposure, though on the whole every place above seven thousand feet is considered to be "Tierra Fría."

Thus Mexico City belongs to the cold land. It is, however, a rule unto itself. It has four distinct climates, one for the night—which is bitter—and three for every day. Of these none is cold. The City also changes seasons every few hours. In the morning we are on the coast of New England. It is Autumn. A golden late September. The air is brisk but informed with warmth, luminous with sun. The kind of morning when one cannot bear to be in bed, when numbed insects stir to a new lease and one picks up one's teacup and walks out into the garden. Here the unexpected gift comes every day. Breakfast is laid in the patio: there is fruit, the absurd goldfish are swishing in the fountain and everything smells of geranium; warmth lies gently across one's shoulders; E. has ceased to talk politics, the housekeeper stops to chat, the boy comes running with hot rolls and butter... It is good to be alive.

At eleven, the climate becomes continental. It is the height of summer on the top of a mountain. The sun is burning, brilliant, not to be fooled with; the "fond de l'air" cool and flowing like fine water. One feels tremendously exhilarated, charged with energy. This is the time of day when I, like to pick my way through the streets, to stand and stare, to walk slowly across the Cathedral Square under the shade of the brim of my hat. This full noon lasts for several hours. Then comes the cloud-burst and through the early evening, rain falls with the sound of rain falling in the hot countries all over the world.



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in Egypt, in Burma... Later, it is a spring evening in a large city: mild, tenuous, nostalgic, laid out to be long. It is not long. It is long. Darkness descends with a sudden extinguishing sweep like the cover on the canary's cage. Energy ebbs, the heart contracts with fear. This is no time to be out in the streets, this is the hour of return, of the house, the hearth, the familiar ritual. "Alors, il s'est retiré dans son intérieur."

The hotel rooms is desolate, the lamp dim. There is nothing then but the panicked dash for the clean, well-lighted places.

There are none. The current is wretched all over the city. There are no cafes, no pubs, only bars for men, and huge pastry-shops. You do not dine before ten, unless you are willing to eat waffles in a pharmacy got up like a mosque at Sanborn's astonishing emporium; the cinemas waste no money on illumination; there is going to be a concert on Friday next week. Some of the hotel bars are open to women. They are full of tourists and Mexicans emphatically without wives. Besides, this is not a good country to drink in: in daytime one does not want it at all and at night one wants it too much.

We decide to have dinner at Henri's, a French restaurant that enjoys a reputation in the hemisphere. We push through the doors. One night in the early nineteen-thirties, a friend was good enough to take me to a restaurant in London which in its day had been a very famous restaurant indeed. The list of its patrons was literary and glamorous, the wine and cooking admirable; it had a speakeasy cachet. Our elders and betters had talked and drunk there through the nights of the First War when they were young and notorious; they had lined there in the 'twenties when they were well-known and middle-aged. It had had the honours of at least five contemporary novels. Let us call it Spisa's. I had never been there, and I believe it was my twentieth birthday, or the eve of my twentieth birthday. When we got to Spisa's the shutters were down, the dining-room dark and the owner dying. I mean literally dying. Mr. S. was on his death-bed and the priest had just been. My friend was a face from the better days, so they were much touched to see her at this hour. She was also a Catholic. They took her in to Mr. S.'s where she stayed in prayer for some time. I was put into a parlour where an Austrian waiter and an Italian waiter were saying their rosaries. I had no rosary, but the Italian waiter went and found me one. Later they would not let us go but insisted that we have our dinner. They sent out for some chops and lager from the pub in Charlotte Street and made us eat it in the dining-room. There was just one lamp lit above our table, otherwise it

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was quite dark. As we ate people came to us and whispered to my friend in Italian. I could see she had been weeping. Presently we walked home and later become quite unreasonably gay.

* * *

As E. and I pushed through Henri's swing doors, there was just one lamp lit above one table. The waiters stood huddled in gloom. I sank into self-pity. I know it is futile to indulge in my regret that I came too late upon this earth to enjoy the pleasures of the table at Edwardian house parties, but to think what I missed in my own time—I have never been to the Chapon Fin at Bordeaux, I was too late for Voisin's at Paris, too late for Spisa's, and now too late for Henri of Mexico City. Then I pulled myself together: a fellow creature was dying; I still had no rosary but I was ready to pay such respects as I could.

A second lamp was lit with small effect above a second table, chairs were pushed back and one of those French menus, large as a poster, was laid before us decorously like a floral tribute. No one in extremis? Service as usual? But no, the place was too preposterous: the hush, the darkness, the gloom; no funeral parlour in the U.S.A. could stay in business for a week with such an atmosphere. We had yet to learn that this was merely the regular nightly aspect of public eating places all over the Republic.

I must try some Mexican wine. I order a bottle of something called Santo Tomas. When poured out, it looks quite black. I sniff before tasting, so the shock when it comes is not as devastating as it might have been. I yell into the darkness to have the bottle removed.

The head waiter shuffles up gracefully. "Anything wrong, Señora?"

"Taste it."

He does. His face stays serene. Sheer self-control.

"There is something very wrong with this bottle. Taste it again."

"? ? ? es regular."

Regular? Cheap ink dosed with prune juice and industrial alcohol, as harsh on the tongue as a carrot-grater? Regular! What a country, what palates, what digestion. They refuse to change the Santo Tomás for another bottle of Mexican wine—rather disobliging of them I thought then—but insist that we take an imported wine instead. I choose a Spanish claret, one of the Marqués de Riscal's honorees "ríos." It is good, but it costs ten shillings a bottle,

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which is too much to pay for one's glass or two at dinner in a wine country. Perhaps, it begins to dawn on me, Mexico is not a wine country. The Spaniards did not cultivate the grape here; the idea being to import wine from Spain and charge duty. For the same reason they cut down the olive trees and forbade the culture of silk-worms. Oil, silk and wine were to New Spain what rum and tea were to Massachusetts and Maryland. After Independence, everybody was too busy murdering each other to plant vineyards and olive groves, and what is being produced now is only a new incentive a murder. I have learned to swallow my Santo Tomás, with a liberal admixture of water, like a man.

The food at Henri's is excellent; French in cooking and Mexican in lavishness. The service is as regular as the lighting and the wine. To sit in the penumbra with nothing but death and Santo Tomás to occupy one's mind is like an Irish wake without whisky, unnerving. Again my cries rend the shadows for something to eat.

"Where is that 'Terrine' we ordered? It must be ready."

"It is ready. But the Prawns-and-Rice are not."

"But we are having the 'Terrine' first."

"Yes, the 'Terrine' comes first, but the Prawns are not ready."

"We are not going to have them at the same time. Please bring us the 'Terrine' now."

"Señora: we must wait for the Prawns. Then you will have the 'Terrine' first."

"I mean first now, not first then."

"Yes, Señora, first. First in a little while."

"Will you please bring the Terrine at once?"

"At your taste, Señora. I shall run to tell the chef to hurry up the Prawns."

We wait. Then the "Terrine" is brought over from the sideboard in the Stygian corner where it had been reposing, and here on its heels are the Prawns, sizzling. They should not wait. So much is clear now, everything is allowed to take its time but once your dinner is on its breathless way, there must be no pause. The custom must have ruined better digestions than mine. It is unfathomable, and it is bedrock.

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